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*People's War  
or  
Negotiations?*

*a progressive labor pamphlet*

# READ

# CHALLENGE

*The Revolutionary Newspaper*



7,000 backed GE strikers at SDS-sponsored rally outside Labor Department building in Washington, D.C. Nov. 15

WHAT IS THE PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

The PLP is a revolutionary communist party made up of black and white industrial and other workers, teachers, students and GI's. We put out the monthly newspaper CHALLENGE. We think the capitalist system in the US is based on the exploitation of all workers and that racism is a tool for keeping the biggest bankers and industrialists in power. The present system means that a small group owns and controls the sources of wealth--factories, mines, and land. Because they're the owners, they use this to develop a huge government machine that serves them and *not the people!* They try to turn everything to their advantage, try to profit from all the suffering of the people, try to use the newspapers, TV, radio, & schools--which they own and control--to back them up and divide the people. To secure gains that these rich rulers can't turn around through force and trickery, workers and their allies *will have to smash the bosses, cops, and courts, which are used to crush workers.* We must build a new government and a whole new society run by and for the workers, which will deprive the rich parasites of every drop of power. *WE MUST BUILD SOCIALISM!*

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# Introduction

By now most workers and students oppose the war. But there's a lot of disagreement. Many see the war as a mistake, a foolish departure from an otherwise pretty sound policy. Supposedly, right-wing "hawks" (as opposed to liberal "dove" politicians) got us into "this mess". Nixon is seen as a vicious fool, or maybe a tool of crazed generals, or both. Those who think this way once looked to McCarthy or Robert Kennedy; now they hope Fulbright or perhaps McGovern will "win out" so that negotiations "can bring peace to a war-torn world."

We disagree. Vietnam is not a "terrible mistake". The U.S. Vietnam policy was developed *largely* by liberal "dove" politicians--for instance, John F. Kennedy--not by conservative "hawks". Crushing revolutions--at home and around the world--has always been the *main* content of U.S. government policy, for "liberals" and "conservatives". The attempt to achieve counter-revolution in Vietnam is closely tied to a crucial U.S. strategy--the defeat of revolutionary communism, of the political power of workers, in China.

Vietnam is no mistake. The U.S. government needs Asia--especially China--for investments, raw material and cheap labor. For years it worked--at first with the French, then mainly alone, and now with great help from Russia--to make this strategic area of Southeast Asia a stronghold against revolutionary communism. Liberal and conservative politicians don't disagree over whether to defeat working people's power, but over *how best to smash communism*. All of them recognize the value of negotiations. All see the need to work with sellouts who pose as reds. "Hawk" Nixon, for instance, made it clear that he saw cooperation with Russia as crucial when he ran for president. And "hawk" LBJ, after all, *began* the negotiation. The disagreements lie over the question of just what mix of negotiations and military pressure will best defeat People's War in Vietnam and transform that country into the anti-revolutionary, anti-Chinese bastion which all these politicians want.

Thus the attempt--by the New Mobilization Committee and its coat-tail, the Student Mobilization Committee--to build imperialist "doves" like Fulbright, McGovern and Goodell into super-stars is a real attack on the ability of American workers and students to fight against imperialism in Asia. When the U.S. has *no right to negotiate an inch of Vietnam* you don't serve the people by building a movement that backs negotiations. Since the liberal politicians are really just liberal imperialists, we must fight against them just as hard as against Nixon or LBJ.

\* \* \*

Most Vietnamese are poor peasants. A few landlords used to own most of the land. They took over half of the average peasant's crop for rent.

For over a century, the landlords, joined later by big businessmen and other local parasites, worked as junior partners to a series of imperialist powers--first France, then Japan, now the U.S.--getting some crumbs from the exploitation and oppression of most of the people.

Since around the start of World War II, Vietnamese peasants' and workers' fight against these oppressors has grown into a magnificent war of millions of working people, inspiring people all over the world. At present that People's War has been set back--not from the outside mainly, but from within, by leaders who claim to be reds but really want to make a deal with imperialism. These leaders see thorough-going revolution (not the U.S. government) as the *main* enemy. They work closely with the Russian government against China. With a lot of help from the Russian leaders, they have clearly gained the upper hand in North Vietnam (the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which we'll refer to as the DRV) and among the "Viet Cong", the National Liberation Front, or NLF. These misleaders have adopted a tragic policy of negotiations, haggling with imperialism. People's War is the magnificent initiative of millions against their class enemies, the policy of relying on the working people and fighting in order to smash imperialism. This has given way to the policy of negotiations for a deal and thus only fighting *in order to influence the negotiations*. We will discuss this in detail later. A deal will mean the imperialists get at least one thing: Vietnam as a stronghold against workers' and peasants' power in the rest of South-east Asia, *and a bastion against China*. The rest of the details are secondary. This deal can't possibly serve the needs of Vietnamese working people, or of workers anywhere. Workers need to smash imperialism.

But we should make no mistake. The Vietnamese working people *are* being misled. But there is no similarity between the masses of people who are being misled, on the one hand, and the U.S. government and its various puppets in Vietnam on the other. The fact that Vietnamese working people at present have bad leaders doesn't change the fact that the U.S. government is fighting those working people. And it is because the peasants and workers have fought so magnificently, that the present situation is so tragic.

The present leaders of the NLF and the DRV rely largely on appeals to nationalism to keep the people from seeing through their betrayal of People's War. *But that can only work so long*. We are sure that many Vietnamese have already seen through it. Experience in class struggle helps expose any misleader. And the Vietnamese people's fight is at root a *magnificent class struggle*. New leaders will emerge, based in the people, relying on and serving workers and peasants. *The sellouts will be swept aside!*

# *the french in vietnam*

The French never did "pacify" Vietnam. There were revolts throughout the period of French rule, from the mid-19th century to 1954.

During the 1920's and '30's opposition grew. Economic exploitation was crushing the people. French capitalists set up huge plantations, growing rubber and rice. They increased the concentration of land owned by the landlords, recruiting colonial civil servants from these "mandarins".

Nevertheless, some of the "mandarins" got restless. They wanted more of the wealth sucked out of the working people. So they wrangled with the French for years--but they never tried to kick them out. That would have meant rousing the people--and then, well, anything could happen. These are the ones who today work for the U.S.

The communists were the only organized group committed to driving France out of Vietnam.

## THE RISE OF THE VIETMINH

When France fell in 1940, Japan took over Indochina. Vast quantities of rice were seized by the Japanese, so that about 2 million Vietnamese died of starvation during World War II.

The Vietnamese, as always, fought back. The Vietminh was formed, led by the Communist Party. By the time the war ended, most of the country was controlled by Vietminh forces. On September 2, 1945, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed.

The French (and the U.S.) didn't want to lose "their" colony. Backed by British and U.S.-controlled Kuomintang (anti-communist Chinese) forces, French troops returned to Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh, the Vietminh leader and, until his recent death, president of north Vietnam, made a deal with the French. The French used this as a cover to build up troops. In November, the French navy bombed the port of Haiphong, thus starting the French/Indochinese war. It ended eight years later in a French defeat.

## THE U.S. HELPS THE FRENCH

Under both Truman and Eisenhower, the U.S. backed the French. Starting in 1947, vast amounts of Marshall Plan aid went to France for use in the war. In 1949, after the Chinese people beat the U.S.-backed

Kuomintang, the aid increased, and in 1950, with the outbreak of the Korean war, the U.S. government further expanded its aid and set up a military mission in Vietnam. By 1954, the U.S. was paying about 80% of French war costs.

This was a time when the government was moving hard to destroy the much-weakened Left in the U.S., especially among workers, and overseas, was adopting the key strategy of encircling and defeating revolutionary communism in China.

But vast U.S. aid and hundreds of thousands of French troops couldn't beat the Vietnamese people. The French were isolated in outposts and hostile cities. Desperate to disguise the colonial nature of the war, the French "officially" granted their dedicated puppet emperor Bao Dai independence. . .several times!

But perhaps, one might say, the U.S. thought the French were popular in Vietnam--maybe that, and not any attempt to smash China, was behind U.S. war-aid to France? Eisenhower answers that argument quite well:

The enemy had much popular sympathy, and many civilians aided them by providing both shelter and information. . .guerrilla warfare cannot work two ways; normally only one side can enjoy reliable citizen help. . .the French could not win the war because the internal political situation in Vietnam . . .badly weakened their military position.  
(Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, p. 373)

### IMPERIALIST STRATEGY, 1954

In mid-March, '54, the French told Washington they were losing; they were gaining nothing by doing the fighting *for the U.S.*: they wanted out! The U.S. government took a different line. Secretary of State Dulles put forth a "fundamental policy decision" (as the *Times*' James Reston called it): "Imposition" of communism on southeast Asia "by whatever means" (!) would not be allowed. (*New York Times*, 3/30/54)

The class of powerful businessmen and bankers who own and run this country, and the government apparatus they control, knew one thing: Vietnam had to be "held".

This is not to say there were no differences. As today, there were apparently "hawks" and "doves". Here is Hawk/Nixon:

. . .If the French withdrew, Indochina would become Communist-dominated within a month. . .It is hoped that the United States will not have to send troops there, but if this government cannot avoid it, the Administration must face up to the situation and dispatch forces. (*New York Times*, 4/17/54)

And here is Dove/Kennedy:

It should be apparent that the popularity. . .of Ho Chi Minh. . .throughout Indochina would cause a coalition government to result in eventual domination by the Communists. (John F. Kennedy, speech in the Senate, 4/6/54)

Thus, Kennedy argued, the U.S. should form a government under the pro-U.S. reactionary, Ngo Dinh Diem--*excluding the anti-French Vietminh!!*--and guarantee that communism would not be "imposed", using aid and, "whenever necessary. . .[with] some commitment of our manpower" for this purpose.

Just as it is today: the difference between "hawk" imperialists and "dove" imperialists was one of minor tactics--essentially a question of timing. Nixon and Kennedy were both dead against allowing communist control; both were aware of the Vietminh's overwhelming popularity. Despite bombast about democracy, when these men talked about preserving what Kennedy called "the values and institutions which are held dear in France and throughout the non-Communist world, as well as in the U.S.", they only meant: *more money for the giant banks and corporations which run the U.S. empire.*

Kennedy's tactics, not Nixon's, were adopted. So much for the "right-wing 'hawk' theory" about the origins of the war.

### THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS

The U.S. government wanted to make a deal that would prevent *total* Vietminh victory, set up a pro-U.S. regime, and from this base, eventually transform all of Vietnam into a weapon against China. The *formal terms* of the Geneva Agreements weren't letter-perfect for the U.S. For instance, south Vietnam was supposed to be separated from the north *only temporarily*. Nationwide elections in '56 were to reunify the country. And no reprisals were to be taken against participants in the war. Eisenhower told a news conference:

The agreement did contain features. . .that we did not like, *but a great deal would depend on how these features worked out in practice.* (*Mandate for Change*, p. 371)

"How these features" were to "work out in practice" was indicated a few days later by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles who said:

One of the good aspects of the Geneva Conference is that it advanced the truly independent status of southern Vietnam. (*New York Times*, 7/24/54)

In other words, the U.S. was going ahead with Kennedy's plan, full speed.

We don't think this came as a shock to the Vietminh leaders. U.S. imperialism had made quite plain that it wouldn't give up Southeast Asia without a war. There was *never* a shadow of a chance of a negotiated settlement that would give the Vietminh control of all of Vietnam. There was therefore really *no good reason* for the Vietminh to participate in the talks in the first place. The U.S. would have rather fought than switched, so what could the Vietminh gain? *They had won on the battlefield.* The French were defeated. The U.S. government--despite the *wishes* of the ruling class to hold Vietnam--was in a bad position to fight. *U.S. workers had grumbled loud enough about Korea. A mass U.S. invasion in 1954 would have brought out contradictions as sharp as those that emerged a dozen years later!* This would have been terrific. But the Vietminh leaders negotiated--and lost at the conference table half of what they'd won in the anti-imperialist war.

We think this showed political weaknesses that are even more clearly manifested in the present negotiations.

\*First, the Vietminh leaders did not have an outlook of world-wide class struggle. They were guided by nationalism, and did not act in accordance with the crucial importance of the struggle in Vietnam to working people all over the world. By continuing the fight, they would have held down the U.S.--preventing troops from being used elsewhere. Their revolutionary war would have defeated the myth of U.S. invincibility, and aided revolutionary struggle all over.

\*Second, this nationalist outlook didn't even help the people of Vietnam, let alone the whole world. Guided by this outlook, the leaders made a second political error--they thought you could get something from imperialism by playing nice. U.S. imperialism never gave anyone anything out of love and kindness. People's War, class struggle leading to thoroughgoing social revolution guided by an internationalist outlook, not "peace talks" are what's needed to defeat imperialism--in Vietnam, or in the U.S. For the U.S. government represents the very billionaires who must keep Vietnam in the "right hands"--they are the ones who oppress working people on every continent. Who ever heard of a ruling class surrendering power peaceably? By making this deal, by letting the U.S. government swindle Vietnamese working people, the Vietminh leaders set a bad precedent for other movements--in Asia and elsewhere.

\*This second error--hoping for some gain from negotiations--was related to a third political mistake: trying to get somewhere by playing off U.S. "hawk" and "dove" *imperialists*. This bore terrible fruit. Instead of fighting the war through to the end--which would have immensely weakened the U.S. imperialists and aided working people's struggles all over--instead they relied on Kennedy, and he gave them Ngo Dinh Diem, the puppet butcher. Together, the U.S. government and their pet cobra Diem subjected the Vietnamese to years of vicious exploitation and oppression before People's War reasserted itself fully in the '60's.

And now the same leadership is selling the working people out once again. The scenario is quite similar. Fulbright and McGovern are calling for a "coalition government" including the N.L.F. -- which proposal, at this point, corresponds politically to "dove" Kennedy's stand in 1954. And the D.R.V./N.L.F. leaders are buying this. But more on this later....



#### VIETMINH STRENGTH IN THE SOUTH

Some U.S. apologists have argued that, at the time of Geneva, the Vietminh was really quite weak in the south. Thus, they claim, the

U.S. takeover was only a formalization of political reality. But this theory is dead wrong. Consider the report of the virulent anti-communist, Joseph Alsop, who travelled through Vietminh-controlled areas in the south just after Geneva:

It was difficult for me...to conceive of a Communist government genuinely 'serving the people.' I could hardly imagine a communist government that was also a popular government and almost a democratic government. But this was just the sort of government the palm-hut state actually was....By the time Dienbienphu fell, very nearly half of southern Indochina was under the control of the Vietminh. (New Yorker Magazine, June 25, 1955).

Thus in Vietminh-liberated areas all over the south there had been a social revolution. The landlords had been overthrown. But the U.S.-created Diem regime gave the landlords one more chance!

The U.S. war against Vietnam, which started in '54 can be divided into four stages.

- \* From '54-'60, the U.S. tried to create an anti-communist government under Ngo Dinh Diem.
- \* From '60-'65, the U.S. used "special war" to fight the growing Vietnamese revolt with "native forces."
- \* From '65-'68, the U.S. invaded the south and bombed the north.
- \* From '68 to the present, negotiations took the "people" out of People's War in Vietnam.

## 1954 - 1960: *Imperialism Builds A Government*

The U.S. wanted an anti-red regime in the south to expand counter-revolutionary activities throughout Asia and encircle China. But the U.S. needed someone to head up this regime. Here's how they chose Ngo Dinh Diem:

Secretary of State Dulles picked him, Senator Mike Mansfield endorsed him, Francis Cardinal Spellman praised him, Vice President Nixon liked him, and President Eisenhower OK'd him. (Look, January 28, 1965).

As Look magazine admits, Diem was supported by the U.S. government, not the Vietnamese working people. He was not the father of his country. *He was the employee of his boss!*

### BUILDING SUPPORT THROUGH BRIBERY AND FRAUD

To get the army to support Diem, as soon as the Geneva Conference ended, the U.S. government started sending aid directly to Diem. At the same time, \$12 million in bribes was distributed to leaders of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hoa religious sects. This became an established pattern -- bribes, for the army and selected civilians. Thus from '55-'60, 3/4 of the \$2 billion in aid to Diem went for the army. The small amount that paid for the "commodity imports" program was intended to get support from the middle class, *the only ones who could afford to buy anything.*

But the U.S. government didn't just bribe support into existence. It also tried to trick it into existence. About 900,000 northern refugees moved south between '54 and '55. The U.S. government claims these people "voted with their feet" against the reds. Actually, the government is lying:

The mass flight was admittedly the result of an extremely intensive...American psychological warfare operation. Propaganda slogans and leaflets appealed to the devout Catholics with such themes as "Christ has gone to the south" (!! ) and "the Virgin Mary has departed from the north." (Bernard Fall, The Two Vietnams, pp. 153-154.)

Thus about 85% of the refugees were Catholic. Entire parishes were led south by a priest. The rest were mainly families of civil servants and soldiers who'd backed the French. The U.S. government spent nearly \$100,000,000 on this *trick*. (Fall, ibid.)

### MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY VERSUS THE PEOPLE

To strengthen Diem's army, the MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group) was expanded. MAAG built the Saigon army up to 150,000 and established a local militia of 40,000. Besides this, a 50,000 man Civil Guard was trained. But this wasn't done by MAAG, it was done by MSUG.

MSUG, the Michigan State University Group, played a key role in building Diem's puppet government. It consisted of some professors, experts in police training and administration, and some C.I.A. agents. MSUG trained Diem's palace guard, his secret police, and a Vietnamese Bureau of Investigation. It systematized the keeping of dossiers, and taught other security techniques.

Helping counter-revolution is the key job of U.S. colleges. Sometimes this takes the blatant form of the MSUG, or the more quiet

form of war and social-control research, or the everyday form of teaching anti-communism and racism in courses. Students have been-- and should be --fighting this. An example is the many militant fights to drive ROTC off campuses across the country.

During 1954-1955, the U.S. government created a vast repressive force in Vietnam, complete with a huge army, police, "F.B.I." and a civilian bureaucracy. Using this arsenal, the U.S. government's Diem regime attacked the people.

#### COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Early in 1965, the *New York Times* said:

*Government must be extended to the villages where all too often...Communism obtains. And the time is short. Geneva fixed July, 1956, as the date for all-Vietnam elections. These really will never be held...the non-communist south cannot afford the slightest risk of defeat. (New York Times, our emphasis, 3/12/65.)*

In other words, the U.S. had to smash the Vietminh's influence right away or when--as had already been decided--they announced there'd be no elections, the Vietnamese people would rise up and smash Diem.

The Vietminh armies had regrouped to the north, as decided in the Geneva Agreements. But there were millions of Vietminh supporters in the south.

In mid-'55, Diem launched the first "Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign"--an attempt at mass terror. All Vietnamese who'd opposed the French were subject to bloody persecution. By '56 about 50,000 were in jails and concentration camps. Law 10/59, passed in 1959, went further -- travelling military courts, complete with guillotines, were sent out; they could sentence anyone to death as a threat to the "security of the state."

This wasn't a matter of terror directed against individuals alone. It was a *class* terror, directed against Vietnamese working people, especially peasants. In the south the Vietminh had carried out much land reform. Hundreds of thousands of peasant families were free of vicious, gouging landlords. They controlled their own villages. Vietminh support was rooted in this social revolution. So, destroying the support meant breaking the back of the revolution.

U.S./Diem began a program to reimpose landlord rule on the peasants. *To implement this program required the terror discussed before.*

The key to this program was the so-called land reform. Drawn up by the U.S. "experts" Wolf Ladejinsky and Price Gittinger, the reform was unusual. *It took land from peasants and gave it to landlords!*

Officially, the plan allowed landlords up to 250 acres and let them charge up to 25% of the peasants' crop. Thus, for the millions of peasants who'd gotten land during the Vietminh-led revolution, this meant return of landlords, return of high rent and brutal landlord rule. And, in practice, it was even worse. The 25% rent ceiling was taken as a *minimum* by the U.S.-imposed landlords. Pre-revolutionary rates of 50-60% were soon common. And, to top it off, the landlords often demanded back rent for the period during which the peasants had kept them away.

These anti-peasant measures were, once again, no blunder. U.S. officials not only knew what was happening -- *they planned it that way!* These measures were carefully calculated. For they knew that most Vietnamese were pro-Vietminh. *Only the classes who'd backed the French were really "reliable."* The U.S. had to resurrect the local rule of the French lackies if it was going to begin to create an anti-revolutionary base in the south.

First the U.S. claimed to be bringing democracy to Vietnam.  
And now -- this land reform.

Who were they trying to kid?

Throughout 1955, Diem refused to discuss the '56 elections with DRV officials. Instead, in October, he staged what was probably history's most creative election. Running against the French puppet -- emperor Bao Dai, the U.S. puppet worm Diem claimed...only 98.2% of the vote.

The only U.S. complaint was that 60% would have looked better. (Life Magazine, 5/13/57.)

The leaders of the DRV attacked Diem for this and called for demonstrations against the cancellation of the elections when, as was inevitable -- since Diem had virtually no support -- they were officially cancelled. But what they did not do was expose the absurdity of having elections to decide whether Vietnam would be controlled by an imperialist-installed puppet, or the masses of working people. What right had the U.S. government to "run against the people?" More fundamentally, it is unimaginable that the U.S. would have given up had the elections in fact been held. This too the DRV leaders did not say. In other words, their political leadership fostered a movement in the southern section that relied on imperialism to hold elections and thereby free the country. Aside from their acceptance of the Geneva Agreements in the first place, the DRV leaders should not have asked the southern Vietnamese working people to wait two years, while they relied, we would guess, on the good graces of the Russian leaders to make the U.S. government honest. *That's a loser.*

In any case, the October referendum was salt on the wound. Vietnamese workers and peasants did not take Diem's vicious attempt at counter-revolution passively. Massive opposition to Diem's phony referendum developed in late '55. Mass demonstrations continued to 1956, protesting the cancellation of the elections. And in the countryside, the peasants fought back against the return of landlord rule and, with it, the vicious army/police raids.

Bernard Fall analyzed the increasingly violent struggle in the September 1955 Pacific Affairs. He sketched two maps. One showed where Diem's violations of the Geneva Accords against persecuting Vietminh sympathizers had occurred. The other showed the location of revolutionary actions -- raids, ambushes, assassinations of Diemist officials. The two maps were almost identical.

The U.S./Diem attempt to smash *the people* had led to renewed rebellion.

As the anti-U.S./Diem forces grew stronger, they began to attack and sometimes wipe out Diemist forces, including individual village chiefs and militia members who'd led the local "anti-communist" slaughters.

Diem's police and army saw their sources of information drying up one after another. To make good the lack, they resorted to worse barbarity, hoping to inspire an even greater terror among the villagers. (Phillippe Devillers, "The Struggle for Unification of Vietnam" China Quarterly, 1/3/62.)

But nothing worked. By March 1959, Diem had to admit it. His bogus "Republic of Vietnam" was "at war!"

This official recognition of the revolution completely reversed Washington's earlier stand. From '54-'59, Americans were told all was well in Vietnam, that Diem was a gem. In fact, a group called the American Friends of Vietnam even hired a public relations firm to push this nonsense. Its founding members were not, by the way, "bad guys" like Nixon or Goldwater. They were highly "liberal" imperialists: for instance, John F. Kennedy, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Max Lerner. Not to mention Norman Thomas.

\* \* \* \* \*

By November 1960, things were going so badly (for U.S./Diem) that a section of the army tried a coup. A month later the National Liberation Front was formed.

### THE MYTH OF NORTH VIETNAMESE AGGRESSION

The U.S. government has always maintained publicly that it's answering the call of the south Vietnamese who are supposedly being besieged by foreign tyrants. Let's consider this -- it's the U.S.'s main justification.

First, we've already seen that the U.S. "commitment" was really self-created. The U.S. installed the Diem regime, which then "requested" U.S. help. Contrary to liberals' arguments, the U.S. did not intervene in an on-going civil war. It installed and consolidated the reactionary side.

Second, until about 1965, there were few North Vietnamese in the south. The REBELLION was a just response by the south Vietnamese to terrible oppression by U.S./Diem. Only animals would not have fought back. *The South Vietnamese fought back heroically.* The "outside aggression" theory fits in with the racist image of "orientals -- slow, apathetic, beasts of burden without feelings." This is a vicious, racist, insult -- and a lie.

And consider: If the U.S. REALLY THOUGHT it was helping the southerners resist an evil invasion -- why didn't it just give them arms

to defend themselves? Arm the peasants! But the U.S. did the exact opposite. From '54 to the present, the U.S. government has been trying to smash the Vietnamese peasants and workers.

The huge "anti-subversive" apparatus, directed against the BULK of the population and carrying out furious repression, linked with the anti-peasant "land-reform" and other pro-landlord programs-- these showed that the U.S. and Diem knew the people were their enemies.

ANY AID THE SOUTHERNERS COULD GET FROM THE NORTH WAS AND IS COMPLETELY JUSTIFIED.

Aside from the fact that the U.S., not the North Vietnamese, were the foreign invaders, the question of "internal" and "external" is constantly misused by the U.S. government to build anti-communism. That is, the U.S. government always talks about "our national interest." The postal strike was against this interest, right? That the postal workers were being screwed by the government, that was O.K. G.E. workers "violated the national interest". Their bosses were fine. Thus the interest of *one class* (which happens to own the U.S.A. and run the government) is put forward as *everyone's interest*. Then, whatever bugs that class is "outside the national interest." Revolutionary Communists want to aid the oppressed in smashing this ruling class and establish the rule of workers -- the people now oppressed by rich. Of course, that's "outside the national interest" of the owners and that owning class is what's "external" to workers' international interests!

So if the Vietnamese workers and peasants got help from the north -- assuming that help wasn't aimed at getting them to stop fighting -- more power to them. The unfortunate truth is that in the first six years of the rebellion, the DRV did NOT aid the south Vietnamese.

# 1960-1965: *People's War*

. . . guerrillas have to live among the people. Guerrillas can't survive unless the people hide them. Mao Tse-tung has a thesis that goes something like this -- guerrillas hide among the population as the fish hide in the sea. This is a very true adage. (General Earl Wheeler, Army Chief of Staff, House Armed Services Committee testimony January 27, 1964).

In Vietnam, only the Communists represent revolution and social change . . . the Communists . . . remain the only Vietnamese still capable of rallying millions of their countrymen to sacrifice and hardship in the name of the nation and the only group not dependent on foreign bayonets for survival. (Neil Sheehan, *New York Times*)

The creation of the NLF marked a turning point in the war. It greatly raised the level of organization of the south Vietnamese people's fight. It allowed it to bring fully into play the mass initiative of the people-- to become a full-blown People's War. The NLF is led by communists, members of the People's Revolutionary Party of south Vietnam, which is very closely linked to the communist party of the DRV. The PRP's understanding of People's War, as described by anti-communists in the quotes above, allowed them to play a crucial role in building the NLF. Unfortunately, nationalism and other weaknesses have turned the PRP's role completely around. So while in the period from '60 to '65, the PRP and NLF played a key role in mobilizing the masses, relying on their experience and their initiative to smash the hell out of the U.S. government, now, in fact, these organizations are pushing for a deal with the U.S. which can only-- has already -- set back the Vietnamese people's struggle.

" The NLF rapidly became a mass organization that reached into virtually every village in the country. The basic political unit of the NLF was the village association. There were various types: For the farmer, for example, the Farmers' Liberation Association meant land reform; for the village women the Women's Liberation Association meant status and more equal rights with men." (Pike p. 166).



Pike, who is usually pretty bewildered by the mass character of the NLF understates the situation. In fact, one of the crucial revolutionary acts of the NLF in this early period was the tremendous political involvement of women. This went far beyond mere formal equal rights -- itself far more than the U.S. government-controlled Saigon regime ever granted. It meant that millions of Vietnamese women were entering the class struggle as active participants. This was only one of the tremendously liberating aspects of this People's War. There was also the tremendous involvement of the

mountain tribesmen. The Vietnamese rulers had always taught the peasants to look with contempt on these "lowly savages" -- this racist attitude could then be used to prevent unity against the rulers. The NLF did an excellent job of organizing these people, who became one of the mainstays of the war against U.S. imperialism in Vietnam.

During the early years of the NLF:

....military activity, even guerrilla military activity, formed a relatively small percentage of the day-to-day work... much...time was devoted to training and indoctrination work, agit-prop and other propaganda activities among the general population, or in what was called economic production -- mainly production of food. (Pike, p.238)

The reason? The NLF's objective at that time was:

...not the killing of ARVN soldiers, not the occupation of real estate, not the preparation for some great pitched battle...but organization in depth of the rural population ...to restructure the social order of the village and train the villagers to control (sic! to *organize!*) themselves. (Pike, pp. 111,238).

This organizational and agitational phase was referred to as the "struggle movement." The NLF was building a vast base in the "sea of the people:"

...it is important to understand the essentially political rather than military nature of the NLF's activities in the first period...Virtually all effort was focused on the struggle movement, and the various acts of the violence program were designed to support that program, as, for example, the assassination of a village chief. (Pike, p. 156).

Indeed, terror was highly selective:

...chiefly directed at total elimination of the GVN (i.e., U.S./Saigon) apparatus in the village...the killing of individuals was done with great specificity, as, for example, pinning a note to the shirtfront of an assassinated government official, explaining the crimes he had committed...(In fact) the *NLF theoreticians considered terror to be the weapon of the weak, the desperate, or the ineffectual guerrilla leader.* (Pike, pp. 250-51) (our emphasis).

Pike notes that:

almost all Vietnamese...were of the firm opinion that as the result of Vietminh and then NLF activity, particularly in areas long under their control, deep, significant, and fundamental change had occurred in the social order... the liberated area was characterized by a greater sense of equalitarianism, greater social mobility with individual merit counting for more and family for less, and a greater awareness of strata, class consciousness, or social solidarity. (Pike, pp. 272-73)

### "SPECIAL WAR:" CONCENTRATION CAMPS AND ASIANS FIGHT ASIANS

Shortly after his inauguration, President Kennedy set up a Vietnam task force, to review the crumbling US position. They saw that Diem was falling fast. Only escalation could delay an NLF victory. Economist Eugene Stanley and General Maxwell Taylor worked out the Stanley-Taylor plan of "special war" as a solution. Adopted in '61, its main points were:

1. To set up 16,000 "strategic hamlet" concentration camps, to include 2/3 of the population.
2. To increase all "south Vietnamese" armed forces and place them under much more direct control by a greater number of U.S. "advisers."

Thus "special war" was an attempt to isolate the population behind barbed wire and then force U.S.-controlled "natives" to wipe out the "native revolution".

"Strategic hamlet" - the name was itself a filthy lie. "Strategic hamlet" meant that the ARVN was ordered to destroy peasant homes, burn their rice, kill their water buffalo, herd them into camps surrounded by barbed wire and stakes OFTEN POINTING INWARD - to prevent escape. Hitler had nothing over the U.S. government. Even the New York Times admitted:

...the hamlet program aroused deep popular resentment  
...tens of thousands of peasants were forced to leave their homes and build new ones surrounded by barbed wire barricades. Communist propaganda focused effectively on the most objectionable aspects of the program, calling the hamlets concentration camps.... This charge, according to U.S. officials, was all too accurate in many instances.  
(New York Times, 12/3/63.)

The introduction of "special war" - the increase in U.S. "advisers" controlling the ARVN, the tremendous increase in Diem's army, the introduction of helicopters in huge numbers, and the "strategic hamlet" program - "special war" produced an *apparent* respite for Diem and the U.S.

in mid-'62. But, *actually*, "special war" only isolated U.S./Diem EVEN MORE from the people. The NLF dug in even deeper. In '63, U.S./Diem was routed throughout the crucial Mekong Delta. In mid-'63, *New York Times* reporter Dave Halberstrom wrote that "it was clear that the government had lost the initiative." (*Making of a Quagmire*, pp. 189-190.)

Finally, desperate, with the crises once again upon it, the U.S. dumped Diem in 1963. They had him and his closest aides slaughtered quickly and replaced. Diem was not dumped, as U.S. officials pretend, because they discovered he was a vicious tyrant. *U.S. officials planned most of his police and army actions in the first place.* His problem was that he *failed*.

In '64, the NLF, pressing the offensive, freed vast areas. It wiped out most of ARVN's strategic reserves. An official U.S. report released April 1, 1964 admitted that 42% of south Vietnam's villages were under NLF control, with the rest "contested." The ARVN desertion rate was disastrous. "Special war" had failed.

# 1965-1968:

## *U.S. Invades*

A lot of people think the "mad-man", Lyndon B. Johnson, is personally responsible for the escalation of the war that brought huge numbers of U.S. troops in and started the bombing of the DRV. This is nonsense. First of all, "special war" was JUST AS VICIOUS a strategy as the escalation adopted in 1965. LBJ only escalated *because special war had failed*. Second, although the first sharp escalation was the bombing of the DRV following the famous Tonkin Bay incident in August 1964, in fact, plans for escalation were all worked out UNDER PRESIDENT KENNEDY, THE GREAT LIBERAL.

War against the communists already has erupted over the borders of south Vietnam in hit-and-run guerrilla raids and infiltration moves as far north as China...50,000 elite south Vietnamese troops are being trained to take the offensive in over-the-border strikes. *Last fall (i.e., 1963) when U.S. officials decided that it was impossible to win the war by confining it inside south Vietnamese borders, they began an expanded program of training the special guerrilla forces at secret bases. (Aviation, 4/6/64) (Our emphasis)*

Georges Chaffard, the French correspondent, wrote that intelligence, counter-espionage, and sabotage missions against the DRV had been going on since at least 1957. And, he said, *they picked up in '61, when Kennedy sought to "disorganize the economic and military potential of the north."* (Le Monde, 8/9/64)

Not that LBJ was any good, to be sure. Except - he has plenty of company. And that includes JFK.

A lot of people were fooled by Kennedy because he talked nice. That reminds us of Lindsay, Lord-Mayor of New York. Some people are fooled by him, because he comes on very friendly. This reveals the nature of the "dove." Thus Lindsay was speaking to a demonstration called by the Mobilization Committee in 1968, a "peace" demonstration - on the very same day that he sent his tactical police squad to break the massive Columbia building seizure.

When Johnson ran as a "peace candidate" against the so-called war-maniac, Goldwater, he was lying through his teeth. In fact Johnson, and the big bankers and businessmen for whom he spoke *had already decided* to escalate the war to a fierce new level. On Feb. 7, using an NLF attack on U.S. forces at Pleiku as the excuse, the U.S. government began regular bombing of the DRV. At the same time, a vast build-up of U.S. troops in the south began.

### WHY ESCALATION?

The U.S. government claims this escalation was to meet "escalated aggression from the DRV," but U.S. leaders certainly knew that the NLF was backed by the people. And the bombings were definitely not intended to halt the at-that-time nearly non-existent flow of guns and men from the north. (On the contrary, the bombing caused the DRV to send large-scale aid for the first time!)

Was the U.S. government crazy? Or was there some other reason??

The real reasons were:

1. To bolster morale in Saigon and delay NLF victory. "Special war" was a flop. The ARVN desertion rate was ridiculous. Huge numbers of U.S. troops just *might possibly* (somehow) beat the NLF.
2. To get the DRV to pressure the NLF to negotiate. The DRV would be hurt by bombing. The USSR could become more influential as the conflict became more complex, and they'd also pressure the north. And the DRV had tremendous influence on the NLF. This second reason was key.



The nature of the war from 1965-1968 is probably the best known to most people. The U.S. sent in first tens, then hundreds of thousands of troops. By mid 1968, there were about half a million U.S. troops in Vietnam. And, of course, the U.S. began intensive bombing of the north.

What was the fighting like during this period? Let us consider the first two dry-seasons. (Dry-season weather is favorable to U.S. government air-strikes, used to cover ground actions.) In both, the U.S. launched large-scale ground actions, with names like Operation Attleboro and Operation Junction City. They aimed at finding and destroying large concentrations of "Vietcong." They failed, and U.S. government forces suffered high casualties.

Moreover, during this period NLF influence increased throughout southern Vietnam. The U.S. attempt to defeat the NLF by "pacifying" villages was a complete flop.

Thus *U.S. News and World Report* presented the following summation of "the truth about the war in Vietnam":

Out in the countryside, where American influence is felt least, things are going worst in this war. Pacification is not only moving 'slowly' as Washington reports, but in some areas the program is in danger of outright failure. The South Vietnamese Army is still undisciplined, lacking leadership and motivation.... The desertion rate is appalling. In 1967, of every 1,000 troops, fewer than 750 will remain at the end of the year. Desertions from the 59-man pacification teams are growing.... Near Saigon itself, the program is stagnant.

And in the First Corps area - the northernmost provinces of South Vietnam:

...despite official claims to the contrary, the Marines have suffered a number of defeats.... The Marines' strategy of securing and pacifying the countryside along the coastal plain has failed.... It has been impossible even to secure the big marine enclaves from occasional attack....

ARVN desertions, according to the *New York Times*, occurred at an even greater rate than suggested by *U.S. News and World Report*. In 1964, according to official figures, there were 73,319 desertions; in 1965, 113,462; and in 1966, 116,406. (Quoted in Phillippe Devillers, *Nation*, Sept. 18, 1967.)

Now consider what *New York Times* reporter Charles Mohr said about NLF morale:

The most striking impression...was the depth of the professional respect the Americans had for their enemy .... Major Beckwith called the attacking troops "the finest soldiers I have ever seen in the world except Americans. I wish we could recruit them," he said. "I wish we knew what they were drugging them with to make them fight like that. They are highly motivated and highly dedicated." (*New York Times*, 10/28/65.)

The counter-revolutionary class character of the American-Saigon war effort remained unchanged. Neil Sheehan wrote in the *New York Times* in 1966:

...Vietnamese with a stake in traditional society... cooperated with France. Now the same Vietnamese, for identical reasons, cooperate with the United States... Nguyen Cao Ky was a French pilot...other generals in the Saigon military junta were officers or sergeants in the French colonial forces.

Where the U.S. and Saigon regained control the first thing "pacification" teams did was try to restore the land ownership and political power of the landlords. A *Boston Globe* correspondent, writing from Saigon, made this point very clearly:

#### ARMY HELPS LANDLORDS BILK PEASANTS

As the Vietnamese describe the war here, it looks and sounds very much like a struggle between landless

peasants in the countryside and their absentee landlords .... For peasants living in areas controlled by the Vietcong the Saigon Government represents the threat that their lands will be taken away from them and their old rents exacted again.... The old landowners...are the mainstay of the South Vietnamese Government and Army... they are the class that supports the present social order.... After the troops seize an area that the VC have held, the landowners move right in after them and even use the troops to help collect back rents. (*Boston Globe*, 1/8/68.)

Things were definitely getting worse for the U.S. government in Vietnam.

They must have had a very good reason for staying. And indeed they did.

### VIETNAM: AN IMPERIALIST WAR

Some would argue that the U.S. is fighting to defend the freedom of Vietnamese working people. The history of the war destroys this argument.

The other two explanations are held by opponents of the war.

Is the war part of a world-wide strategy of U.S. imperialism, a strategy necessary for the survival of U.S. capitalism? Or is it the result of mistakes and pig-headed conservatism?

The disagreement is crucial.

Has it been a consistent U.S. strategy to oppose any movement that hurts U.S. economic interests?

Take the case of Guatemala. In 1954 the Arbenz government raised the minimum wage from 26¢ to \$1.08 a day (!) and started a mild land reform. This included the expropriation of 243,000 acres of *uncultivated* land owned by the United Fruit Company.

President Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles - Dulles was both a stockholder in and long-time corporation counsel for United Fruit - had the Central Intelligence Agency overthrow the Arbenz government.

The C.I.A. organized, trained, and equipped an invasion force, provided air cover, and succeeded in toppling Arbenz. In his place the

agency installed a pro-U.S. dictatorship. Were the differences only ideological? Hardly. The new government halted land reform, returned expropriated land, disenfranchised 70% of the population, smashed trade unions, cut wages and abolished taxes on profits of foreign investors. (See *New York Times*, 4/28/66, for verification of the C.I.A.'s role.)

Or take Iran. In 1951 the government of Premier Mossadeq nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co. A U.S.-directed coup overthrew Mossadeq. Iran's highly profitable oil was turned over to a four-nation consortium. The U.S. share was 40%. (David Horowitz, *Free World Colossus*, pp. 187ff.)

Or consider Lebanon. July 15, 1958. 10,000 marines were landed, with two goals. First, to roll back the rebellion against the overwhelmingly unpopular "President" Chamoun - a rebellion which the *London Sunday Times* labelled a "calculated defiance of authority by at least half the population." (Our emphasis.) Second, to deal with the highly popular coup by Kassem in Iraq. The U.S. made clear that any action against Western oil interests in Iraq could lead to a joint U.S.-British invasion. (Horowitz, p. 192.)

The list could go on indefinitely. For example, the history of 20th century Latin America is filled with U.S. bribes, threats and invasions aimed at defeating revolution. Why did the U.S. invade the Dominican Republic 5 years ago? Did the government really believe that the famous "53 reds" were threatening the security of Manhattan? Or did Washington fear that the Dominican people, who were armed, would throw out U.S. business interests - who had been draining the country for years - and thus set a bad example for the rest of the world? (Not to mention hurting those businesses.)

Vietnam has occurred and is occurring *more and more all over the world*. Wherever the dollar wishes to go, the flag hovers, armed to the teeth with money for bribes and guns for violence, protecting those interests.

In the early part of this century, Presidents were honest about this:

Suppose you go to Washington and try to get at your Government. You will always find that while you are politely listened to, the men really consulted are the men who have the biggest stake - the big bankers, the big manufacturers, the big masters of commerce, the heads of railroad corporations and of steamship corporations... The masters of the Government of the United States are combined capitalists and manufacturers of the United States. (Woodrow Wilson, 1913.)

Marine Brigadier Generals, like Smedley Butler, quoted below, were also quite frank:

I spent thirty-three years and four months in active service as a member of our country's most agile military force - the Marine Corps. I spent most of my time being a high class muscle for Big Business, for Wall Street, and for the bankers. In short I was a racketeer for capitalism...

Thus I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank to collect revenues in...I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I helped make Honduras "right" for American fruit companies in 1903. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested. (*Common Sense*, 1935.)

Many people agree that America *used to be* imperialist, but not *today*. It doesn't need extensive investment opportunities, raw material and cheap labor sources, it doesn't need to prevent other countries from controlling these assets in the underdeveloped world and thereby effectively competing against the U.S. But listen to words from the horse's mouth:

We submit that to restrict - or to permit to be restricted - U.S. investment abroad will not only kill the goose that lays the golden eggs but will serve to deplete our store of golden eggs as well. (*Machinery and Allied Products Institute*, 1965 - a research association for manufacturers.)

And as *Business Week* put it:

Late in the 1940's - and with increasing speed all through the 1950's and up to the present - .... In industry after industry U.S. companies found that their overseas earnings were soaring, and that their return on investment abroad was frequently much higher than in the U.S. As earnings (abroad) began to rise, profit margins from domestic operations started to shrink; costs in the U.S. climbed faster than prices, competition stiffened as markets neared their saturation points. (*Business Week*, April 20, 1963, p.70)

The argument that U.S. Vietnam policy stems from the economic needs of U.S. Imperialism rests on two solid-rock facts. First, the fact that U.S. Imperialism *does* need to control the poor, or "third world", or "underdeveloped" countries. Second, the fact that U.S. foreign policy has consistently been to crush revolutions whenever these appeared to threaten the interests of U.S. business, *in the short or long run*.

Arnold Toynbee put it this way:

...America is today the leader of a world-wide anti-revolutionary movement in defence of vested interests. She now stands for what Rome stood for. Rome consistently supported the rich against the poor in all foreign communities that fell under her sway; and, since the poor have always and everywhere been far more numerous than the rich, Rome's policy made for inequality, for injustice, and for the least happiness of the greatest number. America's decision to adopt Rome's role has been deliberate, if I have gauged it right. (Arnold Toynbee, *America and the World Revolution*; this section is reprinted in Horowitz, p. 15.)

And LBJ also explained the matter:

We cannot shorten the length of our reach into the world... The economic network of this shrinking globe is too intertwined. The political order of continents is too involved with one another. (*New York Times*, March 17, 1966.)

Since World War II the U.S. has in fact emerged as the main imperialist power, replacing the European imperialists in many areas. In order to protect and constantly expand its investments abroad and hold back the development of economically competitive forces - both objectives vital to the health of the U.S. economy - America has become the main political bastion of and military policeman for counter-revolution. U.S. suppression of revolutionary movements is intended to aid U.S. business.

The early 20th century European imperialists thrived under the "weight of the white man's burden." The present-day U.S. imperialists do tolerably well making "sacrifices for democracy."

But why Vietnam?

We made those decisions to intervene because in the judgment of the presidents, American power and interest demanded it. (R.N. Goodwin, former aide to President Kennedy and Johnson, now a super-dove. *New York Times*, 2/5/67.)

There are three main reasons why Vietnam.

First, Asia, including Vietnam, is "one of the last frontiers of American investment." (Jules Henry, *Nation*, 4/25/66.) Thus the Vice-President of Chase Manhattan Bank in charge of Far Eastern operations said in 1965 that "U.S. actions in Vietnam this year...have considerably reassured both Asian and Western investors." Wages in Asia are the world's *lowest*. That means profits are *highest*.

Back in 1954, *U.S. News and World Report*, in an article entitled "WHY U.S. RISKS WAR FOR INDOCHINA: ITS THE KEY TO CONTROL OF ALL ASIA," explained:

One of the world's richest areas is open to the winner in Indochina. That's behind the growing U.S. concern... tin, rubber, rice, key strategic raw materials are what the war is really all about. The U.S. sees it as a place to hold - at any cost. (April 4, 1954.)

In 1953, Eisenhower agreed fully and publicly. (Quoted in *New York Times*, 7/26/66.) So did Henry Cabot Lodge, ten years later. (*Boston Globe*, 2/28/65.) And Senator McGee of Wyoming summed it up:

That empire in Southeast Asia is the last major resource area outside the control of any one of the major powers on the globe. (Speech in U.S. Senate, 2/17/65.)

Second, in a world more and more torn by massive revolutionary battles, Asia, so important to the U.S. economically, is also the scene of the fiercest struggles against imperialism. Thus armed rebellions are developing in the Philippines, Burma, Malaysia, and Indonesia. In India, a peasant revolution has begun and is spreading. In Laos, Thailand and South Vietnam, movements are fighting huge U.S. forces - ARVN-type armies led by U.S. "advisers", or huge numbers of regular U.S. troops.

Of all these movements, the south Vietnamese People's war is by far the strongest. The U.S. Government desperately needs to crush this people's war - or reverse it! - as a lesson and to create a safe rear for operations against other Asian revolutions.

The third reason is China. Exploitation of China was supposed to make this an "American Century" as *Life* magazine put it 20 years ago. And the U.S. government had maintained an "open door" to China for 40 years. It was the main force behind the anti-communist Kuomintang for years. And just when U.S. businesses were about to walk in through the "open door" it was slammed shut in their face. Since that time, the key U.S. government strategy in Asia has been to turn the Chinese communist revolution around. They would like to do this peacefully, of course - they would like Russian-type "reds" to run China, and a lot of the U.S. government's diplomatic, economic and military effort in Asia is an attempt by the U.S. to influence the Chinese leaders to the political right. But, if the ruling class decides that revisionism has been defeated in China, the U.S. government is ready to fight. In this it is supported completely - *super-supported* - by the Russian leaders, who have taken the U.S. government into their confidence and now discuss all problems with their brother imperialists - including the question of the smouldering border war against China. The U.S. war against Vietnam must therefore be seen in the broader context of U.S. anti-red-China policy. The U.S. rulers want Vietnam to be part of their anti-Chinese-communism strategy. That can be achieved either by a) U.S. control, or b) Soviet domination. The U.S. Imperialists don't miss a trick.

When we discuss the most recent history of the war and revisionism in Vietnam, we will refer again to this question.

So the U.S. government has, from its imperialist stand point, quite good reasons for being in Vietnam. And, for our part, we should base our actions on an understanding of this key fact.

### NEGOTIATE? OR GET OUT!

Negotiations are the most pressing fact about the Vietnam war, at this point. The talks dominate DRV/NLF leaders' strategic thinking. We will therefore spend a few pages considering the question of negotiations and examining the period before the talks began. In the next section, "NEGOTIATIONS SAP PEOPLE'S WAR", we will follow the development of the talks and their relation to the actual fighting.

\* \* \*

Even if the U.S. is wrong and the war imperialist - why attack negotiations? Why not back some reasonable man - say Fulbright - who'd get the whole thing over with. Is it "pro-imperialist" to be for peace in Vietnam?

Many would agree with this argument. And often this position represents a real change in peoples' views - from thinking the war is just, to seeing it must be opposed.

But simply opposing the war is not enough. Let's say it "all ends" finally. The main question remains: who won?

The war isn't the result of irrational passions - it stems from the Vietnamese people's refusal to lie down and be stepped on. Peace is all well and good - *but if that were all the Vietnamese workers and peasants wanted, they would never have rebelled to start out with.*

### NEGOTIATIONS: THE US GOVERNMENT GETS ONE FOOT OUT OF THE GRAVE!

In discussing negotiations we should keep in mind the situation in Vietnam up to '68, when talks began.

The imperialists were desperate to defeat people's war in Vietnam. But things weren't going well. The more U.S. troops were sent in, the worse the situation became.

This wasn't really so strange. It followed a basic law. The U.S. government was kicking the Vietnamese. The law in operation was discovered awhile ago by the German communist, Karl Marx: "He who gets kicked, kicks back!"

As long as the anti-U.S. forces relied thoroughly on the people - the ones who were getting kicked by imperialist oppression for so long - their ability to fight imperialism increased as much as the U.S. escalated.

So the more troops the U.S. sent, the more furiously 10 million fought back. And the vivid and moving - the heroic! - picture of millic of working people, standing up to the robber of continents inspired tens of millions, hundreds of millions around the world, brought the oppressed shouting and fighting to their feet.

People's war - relying on the understanding, the collective knowledge and strength of the oppressed to overthrow the class rule of their oppressors - People's War was grinding U.S. Imperialism face down in the dirt.

\*A majority of the elite Marine Corps had been wiped out.

\*U.S. strategic army reserves were nearly exhausted.

\*Much of the U.S. Air Force had been blown out of the sky by rifles (!) and conventional anti-aircraft weapons.

\*The "unbeatable" U.S. imperialist army with its deadly "enormous fire power" and devastating "war of mobility" was getting beaten! Morale was zero. U.S. soldiers - who did not want to fight Vietnamese working people in the first place - were being used as bait - to get NLF troops close enough for artillery or air strikes!

\*In the U.S., black rebellions occurred in over a thousand cities. Strikes were shaking the country. The economy was a mess.

It isn't surprising the U.S. government wanted negotiations.

### DOVES AND HAWKS AGREE: "WE WON'T BE OVERTHROWN!"

But, one might argue, PL is looking at this too narrowly! Imperialism is not monolithic! At the time of the negotiations - didn't the liberal dove politicians want the U.S. to get out?

As we discussed earlier, the difference between hawks and doves is largely over when to use the carrot and when (not whether!) to use the stick. And of course, "doves" like to smile when they stab you. (Thus "dovish" John F. Kennedy gave a Vietnam concentration camp program the name "Operation Sunrise!")

Let's see what the so-called doves had to say, in the year before negotiations actually started. Here's R.F. Kennedy - at that time chief dove:

Nearly all Americans share with us the determination to remain in Vietnam *until we have fulfilled our commitments* ... (no division) will erode American will and compel American withdrawal. (*New York Times*, 3/3/67) (Our emphasis)

McCarthy's stand was identical:

He said at Fond Du Lac that U.S. troops probably would remain in Vietnam for a "long, long time" even if there is an armistice in the fighting. "I would expect there would be formal arrangements to say who would be there and in how many numbers." (*Boston Herald Traveller*, 3/26/68)

It would be "precipitous" to remove U.S. forces within 6 months of negotiations as proposed by President Johnson (McCarthy said.) "I think I would advise him against moving that fast", McCarthy said. "I would put the time limit at 5 years." (*America* (a Jesuit magazine), 12/16/67)

(By the way - who was the dove, LBJ or McCarthy?????)

RFK put it most clearly when he referred to "fulling our commitments." The only "commitment" the U.S. government ever made in Vietnam was to *itself* - the U.S. government promised itself that Vietnam would be turned into a base...for what? A base, essentially, for its key strategy - the defeat of workers' rule in China. What RFK and McCarthy were arguing was:

(there is) no chance of a victory "by further escalation!"  
(*America*)

That is, as long as Vietnamese working people are fighting a people's war, these "doves" reasoned, the more we kick, the harder we will get kicked back. Useless! The problem was to stifle People's War in Vietnam - and negotiations were the "solution".

But let's say People's War *was* "stifled?" What of it? What's wrong with peace?! Does PL want to fight to the last Vietnamese or something??

### PEOPLE'S WAR AND SOCIALISM? OR "PEACEFUL" OPPRESSION!

People's War is not a trick name you use when you want your side to sound good, the way John F. Kennedy called Vietnam a war "for free world virtues." *People's War* means workers and peasants making a revolution against terrible oppression, when the oppressor is very strong militarily. It is a very protracted revolution. Instead of relying on super-machines and forcing workers to fight other workers - the way the U.S. government does - instead of relying on money and guns, people's war relies on and serves the needs of THE PEOPLE: workers and peasants. It tries to turn every ability of the millions of oppressed, all their wealth of class knowledge, all their capacity to struggle together, every bit of their revolutionary anger, into a weapon. It means unleashing their creative ability to make revolution against the bankers and businessmen who try to divide and kill working people to continue exploiting them. From the oppressor's viewpoint, People's War is very "unconventional" - it relies on the people he is oppressing. It is the exact opposite of his war - imperialist war.

Earlier, we discussed how Vietnamese landlords who felt the French were too stingy were nevertheless afraid to call for revolution. Once the people were "let lose" they might sweep away the landlords. And

that is indeed the logic of people's war. Some consider people's war a tactic for getting a foreign oppressor out. That can be one of its effects, certainly. But the essence of people's war is socialism. For it relies - it must rely - on unleashing the class hatred of the oppressed and on vastly increasing their revolutionary class unity.

Why should working people - peasants and workers - go back to the "business as usual" of getting a boot in the face after they understand, at last, that they can win?? The logic of people's war, if it is allowed to develop, is that workers and peasants will seize power - *socialism!* This can be thwarted - temporarily - for instance by confusing and misleading the people with nationalism into losing sight of class goals. But such sellouts can be only temporary.



Now, of course, People's War involves real suffering. But what good is "peace" if the old oppressors - the imperialists, the landlords, the local businessmen - return? Their rule means *incessant* suffering, dragging on and on - until a new revolution sweeps the oppressors away.

Under the 5 years of Japanese rule in Vietnam two million starved to death. If anyone thinks this "peace" is preferable to smashing imperialism, let him consider seriously the position of a worker or poor peasant in Vietnam. *We are not cold to the suffering of Vietnamese workers and peasants.* But it is rotten "sympathy" that ends up handing the people to oppressors.

But, someone could say, isn't all war bad?

Of course war is terrible - but how do you end war? We can only end war by smashing the rule of those who profit from and therefore make war - the imperialists. War can only be ended through revolution. Or consider this:

*War in "peace time" is a constant fact of life for millions!*  
U.S. workers who die of speed-up are victims of the boss class's war.  
Latin American kids with rickets are *wounded in combat.*

And if a deal is worked out in Vietnam which would satisfy the Imperialists, what would that mean for the rest of the oppressed in the world? It would mean strengthening the U.S. government's ability to put down revolts in Asia and elsewhere, strengthen their encirclement of China.

### 1967: THE VIETNAMESE CHANGE THEIR STANCE

As history has shown, not just Kennedy and McCarthy but *all the imperialists* - certainly including IBJ - were glad to negotiate.

But until 1967, the DRV and NLF leaders were not. Publicly they scoffed at the idea. They said that their four points - especially U.S. withdrawal from the south - were precondition for talks. Thus in 1965, Ho Chi Minh said:

Let the American imperialists cease aggression, terminate all military operations against the DRV and withdraw the US troops from south Vietnam, then peace will be established at once in Vietnam. (Quoted in 1/1/67 *New York Times*.)

But these leaders dropped this stand, starting with Nguyen Duy Trinh's interview in late Jan., '67. Ho Chi Minh stated the new public stand this way:

After the unconditional cessation of U.S. bombing raids and all other acts of war against the DRV, the DRV and U.S. could enter into talks and discuss questions concerning both sides. (*US News and World Report*, 4/3/67)

No mention of withdrawal as a precondition for talks. The DRV's original four points had been dropped. This move weakened anti-imperialist forces around the world, strengthened the hand of liberal "dove" imperialists, and gave new life to assorted "revisionists" - sellouts posing as reds - around the world. (For instance, the rotten "Communist" party in this country, not to mention the Soviet Imperialists) Indeed, given the logic of the Vietnamese leaders' new public stand, it is not surprising that they publicly praised the imperialist "doves":

Among even U.S. political circles, many well-known figures, including Senators Mansfield, Cooper, McCarthy, Kennedy, Etc. have seen the right way to follow and demanded that the Johnson administration stop bombing North Vietnam so as to make talks possible. (*Vietnam News Agency*, 3/1/68)

### WHY THE VIETNAMESE LEADERS CHANGED THEIR STAND

Shortly after the Vietnamese leaders reversed their position, agreeing to negotiate if there were an unconditional bombing halt, Theodore Draper said the following about the change:

On February 8 (1967), as the military truce in Vietnam went into effect, Soviet Premier Kosygin arrived in London for talks with Prime Minister Harold Wilson. On that same day, Kosygin pointedly referred to Nguyen Duy Trinh's offer to negotiate in return for a cessation of bombing, and gave it his blessing. He saw fit to offer the same advice the following day. Since the Soviet leaders had previously refrained from injecting themselves publicly into the North Vietnamese-United States negotiating problem, this deliberate repetition represented a new policy. There is reason to believe that the Soviet leaders decided to back North Vietnam's new one-point negotiating position because they had had something to do with bringing it about. According to Burchett (a pro-Communist Australian journalist), it was "open knowledge that a number of Socialist-bloc countries were urging such a move over a year ago," but the North Vietnamese leaders had resisted.... the Soviets had clearly influenced Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues to come down from their four points .... (*New York Review of Books*, May 4, 1967.)

But the *New York Times* asked:

How much influence do the Russians really have in Hanoi? How far can they move the North Vietnamese toward a settlement? What posture by the United States would most help them to succeed? (February 11, 1967)

Both "hawks" and "doves" wanted a deal that would fulfill U.S. imperialist aims concerning Vietnam. Timing was the question over which doves and hawks disagreed. Listen to "dovish" Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. -- an old backer of Ngo Dinh Diem, by the way.

Let the burden of delivering Hanoi to the negotiating table fall on Moscow. (*New York Times*, March 9, 1967)

Why then did LBJ and company delay so long -- over a year -- after the DRV and NLF leaders agreed to talks? Why did they wait -- from January '67, until mid-to-late '68 to get the talks started and going full-steam? Because, as Rusk once said in reply to Robert Kennedy:

I don't think the problem is Kosygin's sincerity," he (Rusk) said. "The problem is Hanoi's attitude. (*New York Times*, February 2, 1967)

"Do Better!" LBJ and company demanded of the Russians. The Russians, scared silly of the possibility of People's War spreading and of increased Chinese influence (*Manchester Guardian*, February 13, 1967) leapt into the fray.

On January 1, 1968, the *New York Times* reported another NLF/DRV retreat. The Vietnamese leaders now said that an unconditional bombing halt would automatically lead to talks. Within a few months, the talks had begun.

# Negotiations Drain People's War

The U.S. government didn't want negotiations in order just to get a favorable tactical settlement. It hoped, through talks, through the very process of negotiations to set back the revolutionary initiative of peasants and workers and thereby stifle people's war. And this has, to a great extent, happened.

In January, 1967, the Vietnamese leaders backtracked in their stand, stating publicly that negotiations *could begin* if the U.S. unconditionally halted the bombing. Then, a year later, the DRV publicly retreated again. An unconditional bombing halt, they said, "will lead automatically to discussions." (*Le Monde*, 1/6/68)

This may not seem like a very big difference, but there was quite an uproar. And within four months, talks had begun in Paris.

Just a month after the DRV issued its "will talk" statement, NLF and DRV troops seized major cities, provincial capitals, and medium and small size towns all over South Vietnam. The fighting was furious, and rank-and-file Vietnamese revolutionaries carried out collective deeds of heroism such as have rarely been equalled. Day after day, in cities like Hue, under ferocious U.S. government bombing and shock-troop assault, the revolutionaries held, and there were very few prisoners taken from their ranks.

No supporter of the Vietnamese working people could help being moved. It seemed that the revolutionaries were about to win! If only they held out...

They didn't. Position after position was re-taken. The working class heroes who held the U.S.' Saigon embassy were soon wiped out to a man. Hue fell. The U.S. claimed that tens of thousands of revolutionaries had died.

## TET: A TALE OF TWO NEWS STORIES...

On February 7, 1968, *Le Monde* reported an NLF call for a "general uprising" in South Vietnam. Three days later, the same paper carried an interview with the DRV's Foreign Minister who said talks would start when the U.S. unconditionally stopped bombing.

Think about this. Isn't it strange if the DRV/NLF leaders were really expecting a successful general uprising that they would still be proposing talks, even while the "general uprising" was taking place?

The theory of people's war, as put forth by the Vietnamese leaders, involves three stages. Here is a description by the famous DRV general, Vo Nguyen Giap:

A war of this nature in general entails several phases... starting from the stage of contention, it goes through a period of equilibrium before arriving at a general counter-offensive... Only a long-term war could enable us to utilize to the maximum our political trump cards ...to transform our weakness into strength. (*People's Army People's War*, Hanoi, 1961, p. 29.)

This makes obvious sense. The strength of people's war lies not in any technical superiority - that is all on the side of the imperialists - but in the massive efforts of the oppressed, fighting their oppressors. This is then of necessity a long, drawn out war. Before the people's forces can raise the fight to a higher level, it is necessary to develop to the fullest extent the initiative of the people at the existing level. And therefore, of course, the highest level of struggle, the actual period of "general counter-offensive," requires the total mobilization of working people, very clear on exactly what must be done, thoroughly organized. Before the actual offensive begins, the imperialists must be completely worn out, their reserves gone; *they must in every respect be in retreat*. Here is how Truong Chinh, another DRV leader, describes this stage:

[in stage 3] our consistent aim is that the whole country should rise up and go over to the offensive on all fronts, completely defeat the enemy... (*The Resistance Will Win*, Hanoi, 1960, pp. 149-153.)

Does this sound familiar? He could be describing Tet! Except that the Tet uprising and offensive "on all fronts" lasted only a short time; and the U.S. government was *not* defeated. The Vietnamese leaders were only *acting* as if the war were in stage 3. Their forces really had a long, long way to go.

### FATAL BLOW - OR A BLUFF?

In an official statement released in early April, the DRV leaders claimed that:

The generalized offensive and uprising of the South Vietnam armed forces and people early this year have inflicted on the U.S. aggressors and their lackeys a *fatal blow*. Nothing can save from collapse the puppet administration and army, props of U.S. neocolonialism in South Vietnam. *Nothing can save the U.S. aggressors from a total defeat*. (Boston Globe, 4/3/68, our emphasis.)

The NLF is in very close touch with millions of people in the south. NLF and DRV troops know exactly how the fighting is going. The Vietnamese leaders are famous for the brilliant accuracy of their information - regarding the people, the imperialists, and the will of both to fight down to the smallest detail. The estimate above was repeatedly put

forward, during and after Tet. It was the justification for Tet, and DRV/NLF leaders continued to use it as late as April 3, three days before the siege of Khesanh was lifted. It is clear the Vietnamese leaders' official estimate, that the U.S. had been beaten, was wrong. And it is certain that these leaders knew they were wrong better than anyone else.

Why would they lie?

Tet was not, as they claimed, a real attempt to seize power. It was a gigantic bluff, a negotiating tactic, a big show aimed at convincing the U.S. government to begin talks with the DRV and NLF leaders right away.

Everything points to this explanation. The entire period just before and after Tet was full of intriguing over these talks.

Despite Tet, the U.S. government, like a good bargainer, didn't "do business" all the way, right off. On Feb. 9, Johnson called a bombing halt. The Vietnamese leaders didn't accept this. They increased the pressure against the bitterly besieged stronghold at Khesanh. Ten days later, the NLF and DRV forces launched a new wave of attacks.

Then the DRV/NLF offensive eased off. Rumors flew. March 31, 1968, Lyndon Johnson made his famous speech - stating he wouldn't run for another term, and "limiting" bombing to the lower portion of the DRV.

April 3 the papers carried the DRV reply, labelling the bomb-halt a farce. (*NY Times*, 4/3/68) Fulbright agreed, saying it was absurd for Johnson to expect the Vietnamese leaders to accept such a humiliating, phony bomb "halt".

But, just the next day, the DRV issued a statement declaring its willingness to begin talks right away and negotiate a complete end to the bombing so that full-blown talks could begin.

In Washington, U.S. officials:

said privately they were "flabbergasted" that Hanoi had agreed to contacts with the United States in response to Pres. Johnson's move... [Hanoi's offer was regarded as a] significant tactical concession. (*NY Times*, April 4, 1968)

And at the same time that they were accepting this bomb-"halt" farce, these humiliating conditions, as a basis to begin talks - the Vietnamese leaders were publicly claiming the U.S. was beaten.

### HANOI BENDS OVER BACKWARDS

Indeed, not only were the terms of Johnson's offer an insult - even judged by the standards of the DRV's "will negotiate" position - but in fact these terms were not even observed. The bombing was supposed to be limited to areas *below* the 20th parallel. Yet areas *northwest of Hanoi* were bombed. When, on a visit to Hanoi, the CBS overseas reporter, R. Collingwood, asked Pham Van Dong about this, the DRV official answered:

[that] Hanoi would not be diverted by small incidents or minor contradictions between American actions and what they interpret as American words. (NY Times, 4/7/68, our emphasis)

### FROM PEOPLE'S WAR TO A WAR OF NEGOTIATIONS

The Vietnam war has changed a lot. If you examine the daily war reports, follow the course of NLF/DRV offensives and the lulls in fighting, it is easy to see that negotiations, not mobilizing the oppressed to wage people's war, was decisive for DRV/NLF leaders. Working people have come more and more to be seen as a resource to be used up whenever necessary, jockeying for position with the U.S. Poker chips for gambling.

Even U.S. agent Douglas Pike had to admit, in his anti-communist book *Viet Cong*, that

The rural Vietnamese was not regarded [by the NLF in its early period of organizing] simply as a pawn in a power struggle but as the active element in the thrust. He was the thrust.

But now this was becoming doubtful. Instead of completely relying on the people, the leaders squandered the great courage of the Vietnamese workers and peasants in flashy "little Tets" intended to pressure the U.S. into some concession.

Thus the seige at Khesanh, which had trapped thousands of U.S. troops (Johnson made the generals promise they would not end up with another Dienbienphu) was lifted April 6. This was clearly intended to show the DRV and NLF leaders were acting in "good faith" to get the talks going smoothly. Then the U.S. government, anxious not to look like the poor cousin - not wanting the talks to begin with the other side "doing her a favor" - called up 25,000 reserves and a week later launched the heaviest anti-DRV air raids of '68, two days running.

In early May the peace talks began in Paris. (Note that despite previous DRV demands, the bombing had not yet stopped) To bolster their negotiating position, the DRV and NLF leaders then launched the second major offensive of the year, so that the talks began on the week of the highest admitted U.S. casualties.

The third NLF/DRV offensive of 1968 came during the Democratic National Convention. That one was not geared directly to negotiations. Its aim was to support McCarthy.

Another example - this one negative - during the third week in December, 1968; the U.S.' puppet Thieu complained that the NLF was consolidating its underground and getting ready for an assault on Saigon. "If they attack Saigon we have the right to cease talks," said the puppet. His master, U.S. Paris negotiator Cyrus Vance, supposedly told the DRV negotiators in Paris the same thing. (NY Times, 12/22/68) *The offensive never took place.*

On 4/10/69 the NY Times reported that secret talks (talks other

than the Paris negotiations, and probably much more important) had gotten bogged down. On 4/12/69, the NLF launched a small offensive, attacking 45 targets in a day.

One could go on. A graph of the fighting over the past two years shows that NLF and DRV forces have stepped up the fighting as a way of applying pressure. In fact, they say it quite openly:

We are convinced that there can be no better stimulant to promote the Paris talks than repeated blows against the U.S. expeditionary corps, and we are acting accordingly. That is the way to bring back peace. (Article from DRV Party press, signed Victorious, reprinted in NY Times, 3/23/69)

The new approach relies on large troop concentrations using conventional methods. In arguing for this method of fighting General Giap notes that:

This method puts special emphasis on high efficiency of all kinds of weapons and equipment. (Giap, *Big Victory, Great Task*, p. 54)

What happened to the "long term war" which relied not on technique but on men? This seemingly "radical line" - big engagements, lots of noise - is really profoundly reactionary. For it substitutes top notch weapons and super-efficient experts for the people.

Concentrating on shock-tactics - shellings and big showy battles - the guerrilla aspect of the war was lost - not however, transcended, as in the final stages of People's War, but suppressed. The U.S. government was, of course, gleeful about this.

The enemy has virtually abandoned guerrilla tactics to fight a nearly conventional war. This has made less important the admitted weaknesses of U.S. and Government [Saigon puppet] troops in fighting guerrillas. . . Present American military doctrine is still not well suited to fight guerrillas, many critics argue. In recent months, however, these same critics have begun to feel such faults are less important. . . "Hell," said one young American with field experience, "We lost the guerrilla war in 1964. I admit that. But this is now a new war and we could win it." (New York Times, 1/3/69)

Another U.S. officer said:

"The men who attacked the U.S. Embassy [in Saigon] never showed any indication of wanting to surrender. . . They were brave men. But they are dead now and you don't replace that kind of man easily." (New York Times, 1/3/69)

There's no reason to disbelieve the earlier *New York Times* quote about the NLF adopting conventional methods. It fits with all the other evidence. As for the last quote--there is nothing about it to disbelieve. It is self-evident that the most dedicated revolutionaries, the most experienced, thousands of mass-based rank and file leaders were killed during Tet. When you think of that--not just from the viewpoint of human life in general--but rather, consider that these were people steeled in years of class struggle. It takes the people a long time to produce such leaders. And to die for--a negotiating tactic. What a terrible waste.



When we say that the Vietnamese leaders have, with their negotiations strategy, betrayed People's War, that is no abstraction. This is a crime, to squander working people, revolutionaries, in this way. The Vietnamese peasants and workers will not tolerate such leaders forever.

The extent to which this wrong strategy has undermined the vast NLF base of *fighting support* is evident from any consideration of the last half-year of fighting. The war *drags on*, it stagnates, it cannot develop to a higher stage because the whole basis of People's War has been undermined. Of course the NLF can go on for quite some time that way--it built up tremendous support. But the best way to describe the war now is: a war of attrition, precisely what People's War need never become. The oppressed have never won by wearing down their oppressors. And especially not when, out of the blue, they may be called upon to take part in a battle the sole purpose of which is to insult Cyrus Vance or show Nixon that his shape of table is unacceptable.

#### FULL-FLEDGED TALKS: ANOTHER RETREAT

In 1966 the Vietnamese leaders said there were four key points--including immediate U.S. withdrawal--and they were not negotiable.

In 1967 they said they could talk if the bombing stopped unconditionally.

In January 1968 they said they'd talk "automatically" following a total bombing halt.

In April 1968, after Johnson agreed to concentrate all bombing on the southern portion of the DRV, these leaders first scoffed, and then right away agreed to "limited talks" to figure out how to entirely stop the bombing so that "real negotiations" could begin.

And when the plan was finally agreed on, when the U.S. government and the DRV finally announced they would "negotiate in the full sense"--the U.S. government didn't even promise an unconditional bomb halt.

On November 1, it was announced that the U.S. had agreed to an explicitly *conditional* bombing halt. The Vietnamese leaders, fully aware of this, agreed to talk. The NLF and the Saigon puppets would be represented too--but Johnson made clear he didn't mean to recognize the NLF as a legitimate *anything* in south Vietnam.

On the face, this agreement showed just who was gaining by talks already. But the actual terms of the agreement to talk are even worse than the obvious further retreat by Hanoi.

As the *New York Times* describes the talks-agreement, the DRV asked for a promise that the halt would be unconditional and that the talks would be viewed as four-sided (implying recognition of the NLF as an entity, independent of the DRV). Clearly the *Times* is right in saying

it got neither. The bomb halt was openly conditional. And, later in 1968, there was tremendous haggling over the shape of the table. So the DRV got nothing it asked for. What did it give? According to the *Times*--the promise not to escalate the war.

What an incredible switch. Half a year earlier, the NLF/DRV leadership had launched the life-squandering Tet offensive--to get negotiations. Now, the negotiations were gotten, based on a promise. . . not to launch big offensives. The U.S. government had plenty to be pleased about. The "struggle" for negotiations had undermined People's War. And the negotiations themselves came with the promise from Vietnamese leaders not to fight hard: a no-strike clause with a vengeance.

But perhaps the *Times'* story is inaccurate? We don't think so. First of all, a good deal of it is self-evident. Thus it is clear that the DRV demanded an unconditional bomb-halt as a precondition for formal, all-inclusive talks. They said so. It's also clear they didn't get that. And when Johnson ordered the "conditional" bombing halt that marked the agreement to talk formally, he said the Vietnamese understood clearly that they were not to "take advantage" or "escalate". If they did, the talks (he implied) would end and bombing resume. Moreover, the NLF never denied this agreement. (The simplest way for the DRV/NLF leaders to have denied this would have been to launch new offensives. But no new offensives were launched until March--which saw the only big fighting of 1969.)

And when, finally, in March, the DRV/NLF leadership did take the offensive Nixon scolded them. He said the attacks by the NLF and DRV forces at that time on cities and towns jeopardized the "understanding" between President Johnson and North Vietnam that produced the conditional bombing halt and thus the talks. It's revealing that on April 3, 1968, a *New York Times* editorial urged Nixon to cut back on search and destroy missions. The army of the DRV, said the *Times*, had pulled 20 regiments out of the south at the time of the bombing halt. And, states the *Times*, the current offensive is not a break with DRV/NLF respect for the terms of the talks. It is, rather, a response to U.S. pressure, which is going too far. This was also the DRV leaders' view. It was in connection with this March, 1968 offensive that the DRV said that attacks on U.S. forces are a good stimulant to the Paris peace talks.

# Russia, Revisionism, and Vietnam

Why have the Vietnamese leaders abandoned people's war?

A big part of the explanation for this lies with Soviet political influence. Vietnamese leaders look to the Russian government for ideological guidance.

To fully understand the meaning of Soviet influence in Vietnam we must grasp the *class character* of the Soviet state. That government is no longer socialist, no longer represents the power of workers against the bourgeoisie. It has changed sides 100%. There is not space to discuss this very important question here. We refer the reader to *Revolution U.S.A.*, the book P.L. is about to issue with important P.L. documents and analyses of key issues including this question. Suffice it to say, here, that Soviet foreign policy is one of the best indicators of the anti-working class character of the Russian regime. One -- but far from the only -- example is Russian policy in Indonesia. After the pro-U.S. Indonesian forces seized control, slaughtered at least half a million revolutionaries and their working class and peasant supporters -- the Soviets bailed these fascist butchers out of financial difficulties and granted large-scale monetary and military aid.

We say the Soviet Union is a capitalist power. No organization which is communist in more than name would say that Russia is a *communist* country. Communism is the highest stage of socialism. Communism means a *classless* society. But the *Vietnam Courier*, an official DRV publication, has no qualms.

Since the end of the war (WWII), the Soviet people (read: government) have recorded tremendous achievements... and completed the building of socialism and *are successfully laying the material and technical foundations of communism.* (*Vietnam Courier*, 11/7/69, our emphasis)

And later in the same issue:

On the occasion of the 52nd anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the Vietnamese people....wish that under the leadership of the CPSU the Soviet people will record ever greater and more brilliant successes in the building of material and technical bases of communism and in the *struggle for world peace and the independence of nations!* (*ibid.*, our emphasis)

But perhaps this "support" for the Soviets' politics is only theoretical? What *practical* support do Vietnamese leaders give their Russian counterparts? On the one hand, statements like the above are of tremendous political value to the Russians. It is hard for anyone to call the Soviet leaders traitors to the cause of working class revolution because they are such "friends of Vietnam." And DRV agreement is shown in even more practical ways. Thus two "independent" governments in the "communist" camp backed the Russians when they invaded Czechoslovakia. One was Cuba. The other was the government of the DRV.

As is well known, the Soviets used their great political influence to help persuade the NLF and DRV leaders to substitute a strategy of negotiations for a strategy of people's war. But let's hear Nixon's thoughts on this. He was asked at a press conference, about a year ago,

...you said in the recent past that you thought the U.S. might put some pressure or *use* the Soviet Union, to seek to *enlist the Soviet Union's help* in Vietnam, and (have you tried to do this?) (our emphasis)

He answered:

Mr. Lisagor, as you know, the Soviet Union is in a very delicate and very sensitive position as far as Vietnam is concerned. I do not divulge any confidences from the Soviet Ambassador in indicating that this is the case... what the Soviet Union does in the Vietnamese conflict is a very difficult decision for them as related to (their objective of)...leadership for the Communist world. On the other hand, *it is well known the Soviet Union was helpful in terms of getting the Paris peace talks started...* And I think I could say that, based on the conversations that the Secretary of State and I have had with the Soviet Ambassador, I believe at this time that *the Soviet Union shares the concern of many other nations in the world about the extension of the war in Vietnam, its continuing...What it can do, however, is something that only the Soviet Union would be able to answer to, and it would probably have to answer privately, not publicly.* (New York Times, 3/5/69, our emphasis)

### GIVE THEM ENOUGH AID AND THEY'LL HANG THEMSELVES

An important source of Soviet political influence in the DRV and NLF is their material support. That aid is tremendous.

With any aid there comes political influence. This is a very important fact of political life. Some think you can fool the Soviet leaders, or the U.S. government. "You can slyly take their goodies -- and use this money to support the very things these oppressors hate." Those who try this can only trick themselves. First, aid makes it very hard to attack those who do the giving. (Among other things, the aid might be withdrawn. And also, getting aid softens your attitude towards those who give it. In Vietnam, Russian aid considerably warmed the hearts of militants who started out hostile toward Soviet leaders while unclear about what was wrong with them *politically*). Second, aid increases the political strength of those within the given movement who agree with the giver. Third, aid, especially military aid, creates dependence on the giver for more aid.

Here is a related example of this strategy in action:

(After the U.S. made a request, the) Soviet Union had been of some help in restraining the North Vietnamese...the officials said they believed the Russians had *withheld some material support* from the North Vietnamese and had urged Hanoi to use political rather than military means to gain its objectives...the American officials said the Soviet Union did not appear to be enthusiastic about the North Vietnamese operations in Laos because success for Hanoi might open up opportunities for greater Chinese Communist influence in Laos. (New York Times, 10/31/69, our emphasis)

Another example: On March 12, the *New York Times* reported that the U.S. Secretary of State had asked the Soviet ambassador to try to get the NLF/DRV forces to stop shelling South Vietnamese cities.

### WHAT THE SOVIETS WANT IN VIETNAM

The Soviet leaders have at least three important aims in Vietnam. *First* -- they want to build up even better relations with the U.S. Again, this is pretty well known. Even Nixon, the old Russia-hater is moved:

So our attitude toward the Soviets is not a high-handed one of trying to tell them that you do this or we won't talk. Our attitude is very conciliatory, and I must say that in our talks with the Soviet Ambassador, I think that they were thinking along this line too. (New York Times, 3/5/69).

*Second*, as an imperialist power with needs just like those of U.S. imperialism, the Soviet government wants to be "in on" the plunder

of Asia. Thus, the Soviets have a somewhat competitive relationship with the U.S. But both the U.S. and the Soviet governments realize that their main enemy is revolution. Both governments are absolute enemies of the working class. *Third*, and most important, the Russians want to defeat revolutionary Chinese communism, and, in general, people's war.

Officials count on Soviet support in arranging a settlement. They think that Moscow would favor a compromise that would vindicate neither U.S. intervention in Vietnam nor the guerrilla warfare habitually endorsed by Communist China. (*New York Times*, 4/6/69)

And they aren't just thinking about the immediate future, but far beyond. Another *Times* article noted that many DRV leaders are politically pro-Russian and this will help the Soviet government:

As it develops its Asian policy after the end of the war in Vietnam, Moscow has made it clear that it is striving to counter the political and economic incursions of China. (*New York Times*, 10/27/69.)

While the Soviet imperialists' desire to exploit Asians will lead to growing friction with U.S. imperialism, Russian leaders' goals in the area in regard to China can only lead to greater imperialist unity. The U.S. government has always wanted Vietnam to be a bastion against workers' power in China. Indeed, this is what's behind the negotiations. In history there are many examples of movements changing sharply -- being transformed politically into their opposites. Thus the socialist revolution in Russia has been totally reversed -- and tragically the people's war in Vietnam is now being reversed.

The U.S. hopes the negotiations will facilitate tremendous changes in Vietnam. The talks are clearly negating people's war. Soviet political prestige has been greatly increased. Negotiations, the transformation of people's war into war-to-influence-negotiations, and increasing Soviet political influence, all help isolate revolutionary communists in Vietnam, confuse those in the middle, and strengthen the hand of sellouts among the leadership. (We are sure this is only temporary!) The U.S. leaders hope that the combination of maintaining the war and at the same time negotiating, will at the very least help see to it that the DRV and any future coalition regime in the south (assuming one results from the talks) becomes Yugoslav-type government: *pro-U.S. and pro-Soviet*. Completely opposed to revolutionary working class power.

"Hawks" tend to be somewhat *conservative*, that is, *cautious* on this score, just as, in an earlier period, Johnson wanted to hold off a little more before starting the talks. "Doves" like the racist Fulbright are bolder. Thus, in a speech to the Senate in April, 1970, Fulbright chided the Nixon administration for moving so slowly to consummate the talks. After all, he argued, north Vietnamese control of southeast Asia would be a terrific way of containing Communist Chinese influence!

The Soviet imperialists have thirty or by now more divisions of troops poised at the Chinese border. Their U.S. counter-parts are fighting against working people in several southeast Asian countries. Together they are trying to put together the forces for an anti-China crusade. This could well involve a huge war with China. Imperialist "peace" with the U.S. preserving bases in a now-"pacified" Vietnam under big Soviet influence -- such "peace" could well facilitate sharply expanded war all over the area.

## WHAT IS REVISIONISM?

We discussed the effects of Russian aid to Vietnam above. In calling that section: GIVE THEM ENOUGH AID AND THEY'LL HANG THEMSELVES, we didn't mean to imply that the Vietnamese leaders *are being forced* to sell out. Nobody *made* them accept Russian aid in the first place. They were well aware that no aid comes without strings. The *leaders in Vietnam*, not the Russians, are the main ones responsible for the sellout strategy of negotiations.

The DRV/NLF leadership is dominated by revisionists. We are not using the term "revisionist" merely as a curse. It is also not, as anti-communists say, a word with which dogmatic Marxist-Leninists castigate their more "creative" brothers. In every revolutionary movement there have been forces who turned against the movement's basic aims. "Revisionists" are people who call themselves communists, Marxist-Leninists, but who in practice try to strip communism of its revolutionary *working class* essence. The goal of communists is to help the working class seize state power. Only workers -- in alliance with others who need to defeat capitalism -- can do the job.

Like the capitalists who now run things, workers are intimately linked with modern production. In fact, without them nothing moves; they produce everything. They are sharply exploited and oppressed right at the point of capitalist production.

In building toward the goal of working class revolution, communists realize the crucial necessity of exposing present capitalist governments -- like the United States government or that of France or Russia -- as workers' bitter enemy. These governments are not bad because bad individuals are running things. They are totally controlled by the giant banks and corporations. They cannot be reformed. The capitalist class -- which these states serve -- owns the factories, mines, and land. These owners *must* exploit the people to make a profit. The main task of *their* government is to preserve *their* profits. Owners' profits are *workers'* losses. They must try to defeat working class movements that threaten the bosses.

The goal of destroying the capitalist state and building a workers' state cannot be dropped without discarding Marxism-Leninism. And this isn't just a question of what one writes in books. Under capitalism, the gains won in any struggle can be reversed, because bosses control the state. Workers' rule must be a very real, a very practical goal. The crucial question for communists must always be: How does what we are doing help prepare workers and their allies for smashing the bourgeoisie (the capitalists) and seizing power?

Unless the masses of people oppressed by capitalism are aware of this goal, how can it be achieved? So the first task of revolutionary communists is to tell the people about workers' power and how day-to-day struggles show the need for that goal. It's excellent that masses of working people and students struggle against the rulers. It is excellent that the vicious acts of rulers are exposed. But it's crucial for communists to relate struggle and exposure to the necessity of smashing the bourgeois state, to setting up a society and government run by and for working people.

Of course, communists must ally with many others who want to fight back and build many sorts of movements against the capitalist state. But their key task is to drive home the need for workers to defeat the capitalists' state and establish an entirely new sort of state, run by workers, one which serves the great mass of working people instead of a few big banks.

The job of reds in Vietnam was to develop the anti-imperialist people's war into a full-flung socialist revolution, a fight for rule by working people. Vietnamese leaders have done the exact opposite. They never tried to win workers and peasants to the need for socialist revolution. They never put forward the need for a revolutionary communist party, rooted firmly in the people, to learn from the people and lead the fight for that socialist revolution, to help show, every step of the way, how each horrendous act

by the U.S. government shows *the need for workers' rule*. At first, it is true, they built the NLF. Even then, while building the mass movement, they spread illusions like: nationalism, belief in elections, the desire for all-class unity. Such illusions hold back socialist revolution. Their job was to fight these illusions, not to spread them. Now they have gone further. Instead of carrying the people's war against imperialism to its logical conclusion--a workers' state, the best bastion against imperialism--instead of showing the mass of people why the people's war must become a socialist revolution they have tried, with negotiations, to sell out that people's war. They are enemies of socialist revolution in Vietnam.

Let's examine this in more detail.

ILLUSION #1: NATIONALISM. The NLF/DRV are fierce nationalists. They constantly refer to a war of "national salvation" to free the "fatherland" from "foreign" aggression. But in reality, the main thing about the Vietnam war is its *class* character. Nationality is a secondary question. Nationalism teaches that the strongest ties are--and should be--those binding all the people in one nation, workers and bosses alike. We think that Vietnamese peasants have more in common with U.S. workers than with the rich in their "own" country. Workers need internationalism; they need movements which serve all working people--not nationalism, which serves all capitalists. Many heroic struggles have been reversed by nationalism. A tragic example is Indonesia. Another is Algeria. The Algerians fought a magnificent war against French imperialism. It ended with France "out" of Algeria. Algerian capitalists took over, since "we're all brothers". These nationalists brought French capital back in. In terms of economic exploitation, Algerian working people are worse than ever. After all that fighting, the Algerians are saddled with the once-"revolutionary", now just-plain-*capitalist* nationalists. They dumped one master and got back two.

Of course, many working people have nationalist ideas. But that's no reason for communists to build these ideas. And if communists fight in their practical, day-to-day work, for the necessity of workers' seizing power, they will *have to* fight "patriotic" ideas. For the rulers will use these very ideas to fight the reds.

In Vietnam the "communists" are the "best" nationalists.

ILLUSION #2: ALL-CLASS UNITY. This is closely related to nationalism. It is a vividly practical result of the nationalist outlook. After all, nationalism teaches that people of one nation share unbreakable bonds. There is an ancient proverb: "Better to be kicked by one of the family than to be befriended by outsiders." The NLF and the Provisional Revolutionary Government (led by the NLF) constantly refer to forming a coalition government "reflecting national concord and the broad union of all social strata." Thus

one PRG resolution calls for a regime to:

encourage industrial and trading bourgeoisie to contribute to the development of industry, small industry, and handicrafts. (Proceedings of the South Vietnam Congress of People's Representatives, p. 55)

And, in the same resolution, they note that:

Industrialists and traders are entitled to freedom of enterprise, and to resist any oppressive competition by foreign monopoly capital. (Ibid)

This means that not only will there be a flourishing development of "domestic" capitalism, but "foreign" capitalism will be allowed. (They just aren't supposed to commit excesses against "domestic" capitalists; but *everything* a capitalist does *excessively* shafts workers.) This is not a good approach.

ILLUSION #3: U.S. IMPERIALISM AND OTHER CAPITALIST GOVERNMENTS ARE NOT THE DEADLY AND PERMANENT ENEMY OF ALL WORKING PEOPLE. Every time the Vietnamese leaders made a deal, the people got shafted. This happened in regard to the French in 1945. A cease-fire was used to build up troop strength for the French/Indochinese war. It happened in 1954. And the present negotiations have not made U.S. imperialism act any "nicer" in Vietnam. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese leaders push the line of working "together with" the U.S. after the war. Thus we are told:

[A key PRG aim is] to establish diplomatic, *economic* and cultural relations with all countries, *including the U.S.*, irrespective of political and social regime, . . . to accept aid with no political strings attached, from any country, in terms of capital, technique, and specialized services. (Ibid, p. 57)

This is like Algeria all over again.

The Nixon administration certainly *is* cautious. What threat does such a program hold for U.S. imperialism?

And these programmatic points are not just words on paper. *Vietnamese peasants and workers are being mobilized behind this absolute sellout of their class interests.*

The PRG has more to say in relation to imperialism. They call for a foreign policy of "peaceful coexistence" and neutrality! There is no discussion of the need for all oppressed people to fight, under workers' leadership, to overthrow their oppressors. The U.S. is fighting vicious wars on three continents, all over Asia, Latin America, and in Africa--with some of the sharpest fighting in Thailand, Laos, and right now in

*Vietnam*--and they talk about *peaceful* coexistence. And what sort of neutrality is possible today? In southeast Asia???

What an immense betrayal--not only of the Vietnamese but of all oppressed people, all workers and peasants. And what a terrible example for other movements.

And a year ago, Kiem, an NLF negotiator in Paris, told the press that the NLF is looking forward to normal and friendly economic and diplomatic relations with the U.S. after the war. (*New York Times*, 5/26/69)

\* \* \*

Looking through the PRG and NLF documents, we could find no mention of the U.S. imperialist attempt to encircle China. There is also no mention of the Russian border raids against China--border raids backed up by the best troops of the Russian army. Keep in mind U.S./Soviet attempts to crush the Chinese socialist revolution. Keep in mind also these imperialists' desire to use the Vietnamese to help do this. In that context, these omissions concerning Vietnam's giant next-door neighbor are very serious indeed.

## A BRIEF SURVEY OF WHAT HAPPENED IN VIETNAM

Here in our estimate is an outline of what happened in Vietnam since 1954, from the standpoint of what revisionists have done:

1954-1960: The DRV dragged its heels, implicitly discouraging the development of people's war. Remnants of the old Vietminh probably did a lot of the work. The people fought despite the DRV!

1960-1965: The DRV leaders belatedly "approved" the struggle. They aided in forming the NLF. People's war developed strongly, knocking the hell out of U.S. imperialism.

1965-1968: When people's war defeated the U.S. government's attempted "special war", the U.S. imperialists invaded heavily, and began bombing the DRV. The DRV leaders brought the north in, also heavily. Why? Two reasons. First, to help combat the huge troop build-up. Second, and most important, to take more direct political leadership of the war. Those who'd been carrying on people's war for ten years in the south were less "reliable". Revisionist leadership within the NLF was thus bolstered.

From '65 to '68, people's war grew in intensity. By '68, the popular base in south Vietnam was gigantic. The DRV/NLF revisionists had been vastly bolstered by Soviet aid and influence. Now that they could better wage the internal struggle against more left-wing forces, the DRV/NLF leaders switched to the "reckless" line of Tet. This was really just a negotiations ploy, as were the few later offensives. The later period has seen negotiations demoralize and squander the lives of the revolutionary working people.

Examining this history, we were puzzled by something. Many of those who died during Tet must have been the most left-wing, the most firmly revolutionary. That stands to reason. Many of them must have been tremendously experienced, as well. It was surely obvious to these people that Tet had no hope of becoming a successful general counter-offensive—that stage three of people's war was still far ahead. Why then did they fight?

The only answer we could think of was: nationalism. To many of these people, steeled in years of struggle, rooted deeply in the masses of working people—to many it was surely clear that this would fail. Only an unwillingness to go against "their brothers"—the revisionists who were squandering workers' and peasants' lives in a chess game with imperialism—can explain what they did.

The Vietnamese working people are learning from these mistakes. When the masses of politically aware workers and peasants fully grasp these lessons, they will be able to fight back harder than ever before.

# The war & the movement

As we see it, the only just settlement would be for the U.S. to get out of Vietnam right away, now, no strings. The negotiations are in fact an attempt by the U.S. imperialists to *strengthen*, not weaken their position in Vietnam. To remain absolutely silent about these negotiations—as do the Moratorium, Mobilization and Student Mobe—is to support them. This means there are two sides, both having some "legitimate interests" to haggle about. This can only cause a haze, disguising the rotten and predatory nature of imperialism. It builds a pacifist movement that wishes just for peace ("Give peace a chance," the Moratorium/Mobe leaders plead) when what we need is a strong movement that fights against imperialism. It means appealing to the rulers—indeed relying on the "dovish" ones—instead of exposing all of them.

There are only two forces with whom any movement can ally in the U.S. One force is the working class. The other is the ruling class—either its so-called liberal, or its openly reactionary representatives. The Moratorium/Mobe leaders have consistently allied with and *built* the "doves".

## "DOVES" ARE BIRDS OF PREY

What about these "doves"? Are they really so bad?

Well, first there's Senator McCarthy. He boasted that his Presidential campaign was aimed at getting the kids off the streets, into the system. He made clear, as we have seen, that he was not for "deserting" Vietnam to its "fate" through rash action. Moreover he is quite a racist:

*Our whole problem is to make them [black people] a part of America, not to deal with them as negroes or as a separate negro problem, but as citizens and this requires a wholly new conception of new civil rights for Americans in which everyone is treated as though they were a white traditional American. (Our emphasis. "Answers to Questions for UCLA Students," distributed by New Jersey Voters for McCarthy.)*

Given the incredible oppression of black working people, the tremendous weapon that racism is for dividing all workers and students, the especially oppressive treatment the rulers have meted out to black people for hundreds of years—this statement, simply brushing aside the conditions and demands of black people with a clever twist of a few words—is outright and viciously snobbish racism!

Senator McGovern, another leading "dove" politician, is also an active racist. He believes in using both the carrot and the stick. Thus, stick-wise, he voted for the Long (D. La.) Amendments to the so-called Civil Rights Act of '68. These amendments are "riot"-control laws, carrying up to 5 years and \$10,000 fines for various acts aimed at inciting rebellion. They are typical frame-up laws. Politically, their intent is to give white working people the impression that black rebellions were all caused by a few agitators stirring up trouble.

On his "carrot" or more "dovish" domestic side, McGovern voted for another "dove's" bill for "recruiting, training, and paying neighborhood youths to assist the police in community relations." In other words, a "pacification" program to cover up the constant anti-working class violence, especially racist murders, by those who run this country.

Finally, consider Senator Fulbright. He always backs anything racist. When it comes to Vietnam, he is a professional "dove". This means, in reality, that he tries to take a very long view of things. He is for more reliance on the Soviets and their local allies in Vietnam--or at least, as we have seen in an earlier section, for relying on them sooner.

These examples illustrate the same thing. The liberal senators are really racist, anti-worker, imperialists, anxious to do what the U.S. imperialists need done in Vietnam, but anxious to do it in a less obvious way.

Why do the Moratorium/Mobe leaders build these "doves" if they are so bad?

Because there is no basic political disagreement between the leaders of these groups and the "doves".

The Moratorium leaders are "doves" of the same stripe. Thus, there is Jerome Grossman, the businessman. (He let all his employees off for an hour to observe the last Moratorium, but only the salaried ones got paid for the time!) Grossman is politically at one with the "doves". Sam Browne was a high officer of the National Student Association while it was run by the CIA. Since then he has found a place in the top leadership of various other pro-imperialist, student-type causes.

What about the Mobilization? After pretty bitter political struggle against the Young Socialist Alliance mis-leaders of the Mobe, a New England conference called by the Student Mobe leaders voted overwhelmingly against allowing imperialist "doves" like McGovern, McCarthy or the like to speak at the Boston Common rally on April 15. These mis-leaders were so upset that the imperialists wouldn't get to speak that they called another meeting, to reverse the first vote. They lost the vote. A YSAer then informed the group that "The Moratorium leaders

have got the Common reserved, so tough. We'll invite whoever we want." They reversed the decision! These phonies provide a "left" cover for the "doves" and the "doves" make them respectable. And neither side gives a damn about U.S. workers, or the Vietnamese.

The Student Mobe tries hard, in fact, to defeat the pro-working class student movement, led by SDS. SDS called for an anti-imperialist, pro-working class march--backing GE strikers, calling for NO NEGOTIATIONS! U.S. OUT OF VIETNAM NOW!--during the November Washington march. The Student Mobe leaders, who'd been given the right to grant permits by the cops, refused one for the SDS rally at the Labor Department. It took place anyway, more than 7,000 strong.

## CONCLUSION

People's War in Vietnam, which has been going on for decades, is full of lessons--truly magnificent lessons, but also very tragic ones. The point, however, is not just to dwell on the great heroism or the sellout that is going on now, but to *learn the lessons* and put them into practice.

The main positive lesson to be learned is that *anything is possible*--even seemingly invulnerable U.S. imperialism is truly a "paper tiger" if we rely on the very people the capitalists oppress to defeat their oppressors. That means relying mainly, in this country, on workers, and allying all other potentially anti-imperialist forces with the working class. And it means telling the truth, not trying to convince people of liberal illusions.

The main negative lesson is--to fight the illusions people have even before, *especially before* it is absolutely essential to fight them. Because if you aren't fighting these illusions, you will end up relying on them. And the workers can't win with their enemy's ideas to lead them! The other negative lesson is not to allow anyone, ever, to divert the movement from the path of relying on the people who are oppressed, never trying "fancy deals" which are supposed to "out-fox" the imperialists.

We have learned a lot from the Vietnamese people's struggle. Fundamentally, it is our struggle. The growing anti-imperialist movement in this country, especially among black workers, has made a tremendous contribution. Students, fighting imperialist and racist universities--from struggles to ally with campus workers, to fighting ROTC programs, have done a good deal. The whole working class is right now in tremendous motion, with an ever-growing strike wave that just a month ago crippled the main links in the national postal system. These workers are taking on the government, union leaders, the press, and often doing it without organization--not to mention without the presence of communists to help lead the struggle to a higher level. The postal strike was sparked by the very militant Letter Carriers' Local 36 in New York, a largely black local. The strike was thus in many ways a material blow to racism, the key ruling class tool for dividing white against black workers. Millions saw the terrific leadership black workers could and did provide! There are tremendous possibilities in this country for a pro-worker, anti-ruling class movement. To build it is the best way to serve working people, here, in Vietnam, and all over the world.

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