

Los Angeles, Calif.

Feb. 18, 1972

Political Committee

Dear Comrades,

Our press in recent weeks has written on Nixon's recently announced "peace plan" as though it is a cover for further escalation of the war in Vietnam. It would be good if the P. C. would arrange a discussion of this point as well as bringing up to date our views on just where the war stands at this time.

My own view is that it is unrealistic to keep saying that every move by the administration is only a screen for escalating the war. I think that to some extent we have locked ourselves into a formula that now needs to be amended in order to bring our position into closer proximity to the real situation.

There have been certain important changes in the war. Here in the United States an increasing number of people have gone over to opposition to the war. Influential voices in the very highest circles of the capitalist class have expressed opposition to the war. Just to mention two newspapers, "The New York Times" and "The Los Angeles Times" are among those who have expressed opposition to the war.

I would like to summarize below my own view of the changes that have taken place:

I. There have been changes in the technique of fighting the war. The U. S. has withdrawn sizeable numbers of ground troops of all sorts. Their places have been taken by South Vietnamese troops. This is the process of Vietnamization of the war. To compensate for this, taking into account the poor military performance in the past of South Vietnamese troops, the U. S. has stepped up the air war both in intensity and scope of operations.

II. This change has resulted in sharply reduced casualties on the American side. The Nixon administration has made much of this, hoping that fewer dead Americans will make the war acceptable here at home. It should be noted that Nixon's hopes in this regard have not been fulfilled up to now.

III. The changes in military techniques reflect changes in American aims in the war. These are tactical and not strategic changes. The substitution of the air war for ground fighting means the U. S. plan now is to

conduct a war of attrition. They hope to bomb North Vietnam to a large enough extent to force negotiation of some kind of peace, along the lines of Korea. In any event, even if this is not forthcoming or takes an inordinate length of time, the Nixon administration is in hopes that the present stalemate can be continued indefinitely. With reduced American casualties, they very likely believe that opposition to the war here at home will gradually disappear or be reduced to acceptable levels. The U. S. has apparently abandoned the idea that a traditional military victory can be won in Vietnam in a reasonable length of time. If they still held hopes for such a victory, they would not have reduced their ground forces to the extent that they have.

IV. If the above is a fairly accurate summary of how things stand at this time, then the idea that Nixon's recent moves are a cover for escalation of the war seem unreasonable and not in accordance with the situation as it really is. In addition to those factors enumerated above, which apply to the picture as a whole, there is the complicating fact of this year's presidential election. Almost all the Democratic hopefuls are making as much as they can out of one kind or another dove position. Nixon cannot ignore this sort of thing, unless he is ready to commit political suicide. I do not believe that he is of this persuasion. His trip to China and forthcoming trip to the Soviet Union indicate that he is planning to serve a second term as president, if he can get the votes.

In conclusion, I think that escalation of the war, in the traditional sense of increasing ground fighting, etc., is excluded, at least for the period of the election campaign. After that it will be necessary to review the situation again. My suggestion is that we explain the tactical changes that have taken place in the war and the reasons for them.

Comradely,

Milton Alvin