

VIETNAM— myth & reality

Harold Levien



—Collette in *The Australian*

"In times of war the first casualty is truth."

"The cruelty of this war is a constant reproach to the conscience of humanity." — U Thant.

Foreword

This booklet is important for three reasons—it represents the right to dissent, it questions the glib statements of Australian policy in Asia, and it acknowledges a wide range of responsible world opinion against the Vietnam war.

As soon as Australian troops begin to fight and die in Vietnam the pressure to silence dissent becomes intense. The propaganda machine works overtime to put the best possible constructions on U.S. and Australian policy. Steadily we insulate ourselves against outside opinion whether expressed by U Thant, Pope Paul, Senator Fulbright or Thich Nhat Hanh.

As a nation we lose sight of the moral issues involved in our own military action, overlook the wishes of the Vietnamese people themselves, and shut our eyes to the appalling casualties they suffer.

If nothing else will, the threat of World War III should stimulate in Australians a determination to re-appraise with complete integrity the basis and the implications of the Government's Vietnam policy and the courage to change it, even where this involves an admission of error. This booklet is to be commended as part of that stimulus.

ALAN WALKER, O.B.E., M.A., D.D., Superintendent, Central Methodist Mission, Sydney. Chairman, International Committee of Conscience on Vietnam.

C. P. FITZGERALD, Professor of Far Eastern History, Australian National University, Canberra.

W. MACMAHON BALL, Professor of Political Science, University of Melbourne.

A. K. STOUT, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, University of Sydney.

D. C. HANNAFORD, Independent Senator for South Australia.

L. K. MURPHY, Q.C., Leader of the Opposition in the Senate.

The author, Harold Levien, is an Arts graduate of Sydney University. He founded and edited *Voice*, a monthly journal of comment on current affairs published during the 1950s.

Published by Harold Levien, 766 New South Head Rd., Rose Bay, N.S.W., Australia. June, 1967. Reprinted July, 1967.

Printed by Bridge Printery Pty. Ltd., Sydney.

Registered at the G.P.O., Sydney for transmission by post as a book.

"I am sure that the great American people if they only knew the true facts and the background to the developments in South Vietnam will agree with me that further bloodshed is unnecessary. . . . In times of war and hostilities the first casualty is truth." 14/2/65.

"The cruelty of this war and the suffering it has caused the people of Vietnam are a constant reproach to the conscience of humanity. . . . This conflict should be related to the longing of the Vietnamese people for independence without any interference from outside." 30/8/66.

"I am convinced that peace talks would commence within weeks of a cessation of bombing North Vietnam. . . . If the present trend continues, I am afraid that a direct confrontation, first of all between Washington and Peking, is inevitable. I hope I am wrong. I am afraid we are witnessing today the initial phase of World War III." 12/5/67. —U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations.



U Thant.

Introduction

James Reston, Associate Editor of *The York Times*, in his recently published book, *The Artillery of the Press*, comments that the increasing power of the U.S. and in particular of the President requires "not a more compliant Press but a relentless barrage of facts and criticism as noisy but also as accurate as artillery fire. . . . Our job in this age is not to serve as cheerleaders for our side in the present world struggle but to help the largest possible number of people to see the realities of the changing world in which American policy must operate."

Has the Australian press permitted the Australian public "to see the realities of the changing world" as far as the Vietnam war is concerned? The reason for publishing this booklet is the emphatic belief that it has not. It brings together some of the most relevant observations on the war and relates them to the major arguments which the U.S. and Australian governments employ to justify their involvement. I believe these observations unmistakably demonstrate the Government arguments to be myths.

The bulk of the comment has been collected from press, radio, U.S. government and U.N. reports, from articles, journals and books whose authors and editors have established reputations for objective reporting and comment, and from statements by persons whose positions impel readers to treat their views with respect. None can be accused of special pleading for the communist cause.

* * *

There are several alarming conclusions which follow from the material presented in the following pages:

First, the U.S. and Australian Governments have shown a Goebbels-like disregard for the truth in defending their Vietnam involvement. No amount of gobbledegook can disguise the fact that this is a civil war arising out of an American puppet government's implacable opposition to the provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreement, which ended the war with the French, and the hostility of several million South Vietnamese to the various Saigon Governments' oppression, corruption, and inaction to secure social and economic reforms.

Second, despite the magnificent technology of television, radio and press and their enormous volume of news, most people know perilously little of the realities of the Vietnam conflict. Trivia, superficial reportage and the continued repetition of the conventional myths keep them in a cocoon of

ignorance. Yet Vietnam is probably the most critical international issue since World War II.

Thirdly, civilians and combatants alike are being killed and maimed in staggering numbers.

Fourthly, there is a great public apathy towards this barbarity. The Aberfan mine disaster in Wales, the Hobart bushfires, the Winton air crash, the Voyager disaster, produce upsurges of concern and sympathy throughout the nation. But much more than the equivalent of all these tragedies is happening in Vietnam every day.

A mine disaster, a bushfire, an air crash, a naval tragedy leads to a detailed public investigation to establish the cause. Thousands of man hours are spent in searching out every relevant fact. (Our governments claim that human life is sacred.) Yet the community hastily accepts the decisions of a handful of leaders which result in the annual destruction of life 3,000 times greater than the Hobart bushfires.

The Western democracies raised their voices in horror against the barbarism of Nazi Germany; but officially we rationalise behaviour which has a similar result when perpetrated by the U.S. and its allies. And the few voices which *are* raised against the mass slaughter of troops and civilians and the torture of captured troops or suspects are silenced by the tactic of labels, deprivation of avenues of expression through the mass media, and an overwhelming counter-offensive of "we are nice guys; they are devils."

Fifthly, the double standards of thinking which promote this compassion on the one hand and utter unconcern on the other extend to the formulation of political policy. In 1956 the U.S. and Australia, to their credit, deplored Soviet intervention in the Hungarian civil war designed to frustrate the popular will and ensure that a Soviet-oriented Government would be maintained in office. Yet today, the U.S. and Australia pursue a policy exactly similar in principle — but with two major differences in detail: first, the Soviet Union could argue that because the U.S.S.R. and Hungary had a common border it could not afford a change in the status quo in a world hostile to a militarily inferior Soviet Union; second, the Soviet intervention although ruthless and inhuman lasted for a few days and caused a level of destruction which pales into insignificance by comparison with the U.S. blitzkriegs in Vietnam. Can the West ever again moralise about another Hungary? How would the U.S. react to half a million Soviet-bloc troops and a thousand aircraft in North Vietnam to help an unpopular regime stamp out a revolution?

Sixthly, there is an immensely dangerous precedent established by aggression of this kind. If the U.S. is successful in

Vietnam it may be encouraged to take similar action every time it believes America's interests to be adversely affected. Every social revolution could produce another Vietnam.

Seventh, there is a real and increasing risk, of which U Thant, Lippmann and others warn, that the war could escalate into a third World War.

Here, then, is an examination of the seven principal arguments which the U.S. and Australian Governments employ to justify their continued Vietnam involvement.

Myth A: We are fighting to protect the freedom of nations to choose their own form of Government.

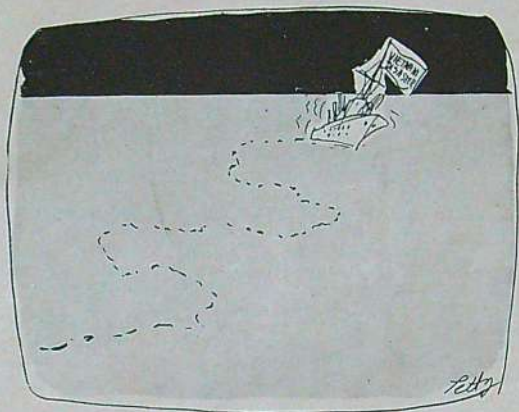
The Reality

1. The present South Vietnamese Government, like all since the Geneva Agreement in 1954, is a military dictatorship without popular support and owing its existence entirely to American support.

Just prior to the 1966 Manila Conference several cabinet ministers resigned accusing the Government of corruption, inefficiency and police state methods.

Thich Nhat Hanh, Director of the Saigon School of Social Studies, a Buddhist and an anti-communist said on October 27th, 1966 during his visit to Sydney: "The Ky regime has begun a reign of terror that makes it indistinguishable from Diem's Government (which governed from 1954 until 1963). I think the best I can hope for when I go back to Vietnam is to be gaoled. But I have to go back because I am needed. The Ky Government represents the U.S. and not the people of Vietnam." At the time of writing Thich was in Paris.

2. According to French writer and authority on Vietnam, Professor Devillers, President Diem in 1957 began a series of manhunts against all opponents and critics in which thousands of political prisoners were gaoled without trial; opposition was not tolerated. Eight million peasants were forcibly resettled in "strategic hamlets". Warner in *The Last Confucian* shows that peasants were forced, usually at gunpoint, to leave their ancestral villages, which were then burnt down. Their rice was destroyed and their livestock killed or confiscated. They were forced without pay to build fortifications around their new settlements; the government troops were often brutal, and the result was to drive many more peasants over to the Viet Cong. "Without warning, preparation or consent, peasants saw their homes, and often their belongings, burned behind them. They were uprooted at bayonet point and planted down



Case for an Inquiry

Petty in *The Australian*.

Canberra, 17th May, 1967.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Holt, said in the Voyager debate that Parliament had an obligation "to do justice to the living and the dead".

in new areas which had not been prepared to receive them . . . they lost not only their homes but also their land."

The South Vietnamese Embassy in Canberra in its Bulletin of 1/11/1963 said: "For nine years the Diem Government had pursued a dictatorial and tyrannical policy . . . the natural and necessary outcome had to be the overthrow of the Diem regime." Such an admission surely provides even South Vietnamese justification for the revolutionary activities against the Diem Government until Diem was overthrown by a council of generals and shot in 1963. And according to Thich Nhat Hanh the present government is indistinguishable from Diem's.

Yet in 1957 R. G. Casey, then Minister for External Affairs, told the Australian Parliament "President Diem's Government has won widespread support. What President Diem and his colleagues have achieved in South Vietnam provides an example and an inspiration to the whole area." And on 14th May, 1961, the then Vice-President Johnson after visiting Saigon described South Vietnam as "a bastion of freedom".

3. The elections held in September, 1966 were for an Assembly to draw up a Constitution. Only those persons of

whom the Government approved could stand for election. Not even supporters of a neutralist policy were permitted to stand. (Indeed in October, 1965, three demonstrators were shot in Saigon's public square on the charge of supporting neutralism.) No person who had been in gaol could vote. Since almost all vocal opponents of the various governments since 1954 have been gaoled at some time this provision effectively disfranchised many likely opponents. To induce a high percentage of the electorate to go to the polls, according to Thich Nhat Hanh, the Government threatened to withhold supplies of rice from those who did not vote.

4. The U.S. reported 160,000 desertions from South Vietnam's forces between January, 1964 and September, 1965. This is about 1 in 4 of all conscripts. According to the British *New Statesman* of March 5th, 1965, the desertion rate was 1 in 3 during the first three weeks of service. With the exception of a couple of battalions the Americans in 1966 decided to replace the South Vietnamese army in all military actions. The South Vietnamese are now only to be used for the "pacification" of conquered areas.

By contrast, Gerald Stone, a Sydney journalist who spent three months in Vietnam in 1965, states in *War Without Honour* "... it is clear the number of (Viet Cong) desertions do not indicate any serious dissension within the guerilla ranks." Compared to the South Vietnamese army Stone says "the Viet Cong have a very willing army indeed. . . . The Viet Cong are among the most ingenious, efficient and dedicated soldiers in modern history. It is doubtful whether they could learn to accept the rigid self-discipline and sacrifices of guerilla life without strong personal motivation."

Before his tragic death in Vietnam on February 21st, 1967, Bernard Fall was Professor of International Relations at Howard University, Washington. His many books and articles on Vietnam established him as a leading world authority on Vietnam. Reviewing several recent books on Vietnam in *The New York Review* of February 9th, 1967, Fall writes: "... in Vietnam during 1966 a total of 20,242 defectors came out of the jungle, bringing with them a total of only 1,963 weapons — that is, most of these defectors were unarmed civilians, a fact which is not denied (in Saigon). Meanwhile the South Vietnamese army lost, in 1966, at least 110,000 men, who simply walked off and out of the war."

5. In a statement issued on their return from South Vietnam on January 15th, 1965, several Democrat members of Congress said "We are backing a government there that is incapable of winning a military struggle or of governing its

people. We are fighting a determined army of guerillas that seems to enjoy the co-operation of the countryside, and that grows stronger in the face of foreign intervention. Extending the war to North Vietnam would not seriously weaken the Viet Cong, who depend for 80% of their weapons on captured U.S. equipment, and for food on a sympathetic local peasantry."

6. Jerry Rose, *Time-Life* correspondent in Saigon, wrote in 1961: "To one degree or another 70% to 90% of the entire peasant population now leans toward the Viet Cong. Here it must be emphasised that the Viet Cong, though Communist led is *not* founded on a Communist ideal . . . its prime objective is *against* something, not *for* something . . . the Viet Cong is against the Government of President Diem."

Douglas Pike, author of *Viet Cong*, works for the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office, a Government organisation. According to Bernard Fall he is the No. 1 Viet Cong expert. "In his job", Fall wrote in *The New York Review* of February 9th, 1967, "Pike sees more material (on the N.L.F.) than anyone except the N.L.F. leaders themselves. He has read reports from captured Viet Congs (and) translations of the huge quantities of captured documents. . . ."

"'What struck one most forcibly about the N.L.F.', Pike writes, 'was its totality as a social revolution first and as a war second. . . . Even more important, it openly communicated its intentions to the Vietnamese population'. Here is an enemy who, according to Pike, lives by a highly moralistic mystique 'far more moral than ideological. Virtue was the golden word. . . . Idealistic appeals abounded'. To see how far we are from that kind of appeal one has only to look at downtown Saigon."

"(Pike) faces up to the fact that an overwhelming number of the original N.L.F. supporters were not necessarily Communist but certainly anti-Diem, simply because they were left with no other choice: 'Many of the original participants in the N.L.F. had turned to it because they had been denied participation in South Vietnam's political process, even in the role of loyal opposition. . . .' If there is any illusion in America that the same opposition is being offered any better alternative today, that illusion should be dispelled by what one of the highest civilian officials of the government of Air Vice Marshall Ky told me: 'If somebody wants to oppose us', he said, 'let him do it in Hanoi; not here.' The chances are that nothing that is going to happen in the future will change the views of such men. With such a system in place, any real opposition is going to stay not only disloyal, but underground; permanent instability is almost built into such a system."



—Petty in *The Australian*

7. The Royal Institute of International Affairs (London) in its Survey for 1959-60 commented "The greatest threat to the future of the Saigon Government probably lay in North Vietnam's economic progress and in particular to the degree of success achieved by Hanoi in demonstrating its ability to solve North Vietnam's perennial economic problems."

Within areas it controls full time the National Liberation Front has carried out land reform, and set up its own schools, hospitals and social services. *The Australian's* defence correspondent Anthony Randall stated on 1st July, 1965, "No government of South Vietnam has ever created and held popular support to match the Viet Cong."

The Melbourne Herald of 29th January, 1966, reported Marshall Ky as saying "The Communists are closer to the people than we are."

8. John Kenneth Galbraith, author of *The Affluent Society* appointed by President Kennedy as U.S. Ambassador to India in 1961 and now Professor of Economics at Harvard University, in an address in Washington on April 15th, 1966, commented "The United States has a reliable association with nations only if it has a clear identification with the needs and aspirations of their people. A government (in Saigon) that reflects the interest of the people will reflect their suspicion

of foreigners, their struggle for a national identity, and their terrible war weariness. It will not fight."

Neil Sheehan, *The New York Times* correspondent in South Vietnam for the past three years who recently returned to New York stated on his return: "The military junta in Saigon would not last a week without American bayonets to protect it."

9. On April 18th, 1967, Sweden's Foreign Minister stated that Sweden would withdraw its ambassador to South Vietnam. This was because Sweden considered that the Saigon regime did not represent the majority of the South Vietnamese people.

10. In other areas of the world the U.S. has not seemed interested in protecting the freedom of nations to choose their own form of government. Last year the Argentine army ousted a popularly elected government. In 1965 the U.S. landed 27,000 troops in the Dominican Republic when a popular rebellion occurred against a tyrannical government. In 1964 after a right wing coup in Brazil the newly installed head of state received U.S. Presidential congratulations within 24 hours. In 1961 the U.S. government assisted Cuban emigrés to invade Cuba in the Bay of Pigs fiasco despite overwhelming evidence of popular support for the Cuban regime.

Are we really fighting to protect the freedom of nations to choose their own form of government?

Myth B: We are fighting to protect South Vietnam from external aggression.

The Reality

1. All persons fighting on the side of the Viet Cong in South Vietnam are Vietnamese. And official U.S. statements show that even with the greatly increased infiltrations from the North over 70% of the Viet Cong troops are from the South. Official Pentagon reports show that out of a total NLF-North Vietnamese force of 275,000, only 45,000 (17%) are North Vietnamese. In March, 1966, they numbered 25,000. But before large scale U.S. intervention in 1964 there were few North Vietnamese in the South. U.S. congressman Henry Reuss, a Wisconsin Democrat, recently stated "When the bombing (of North Vietnam) began there were some 400 North Vietnamese soldiers in South Vietnam."

According to a report from the South Vietnamese Chief-of-Staff in charge of relations with the International Control

Commission on 13th February, 1965, "The majority of the infiltrated contingents were drawn from the former units of the Viet Minh (which was the nationalist movement which fought against the French from 1946 to 1954) in South Vietnam regrouped in North Vietnam after the Geneva Agreement."

The New York Times correspondent in Vietnam, David Halberston, on 6th March, 1964, stated: "The war is largely a conflict of southerners fought on southern land." And L. A. Crozier, a Government adviser on South Vietnam to Australia's Department of External Affairs, stated on 29th January, 1965: "The great majority of the rank and file of the guerillas come from the villages of the South not the North." Gerald Stone in *War Without Honour* comments: "Even if all North Vietnamese troops and all infiltrators withdrew in a negotiated cease fire, the Viet Cong would still have 150,000 men under arms, retain a large portion of the country, and enjoy considerable popular support." (Since Stone wrote this the Viet Cong numbers have greatly expanded.)

An editorial in *The London Times* on 24th November, 1964, said: "One of the fallacies of the past five years in Vietnam has been the assumption that the guerillas in the South were a creation of the North and not a genuine revolt against misgovernment."

2. *The New York Times* of 8th February, 1965, quoted U.S. military advisers to the effect that the majority of Viet Cong weapons are U.S.: captured, lost in battle, or sold by enterprising South Vietnamese. A U.S. Army report shows that nearly twice the number of weapons were lost to the Viet Cong as were captured from the Viet Cong. The Viet Cong have not a single aircraft.

3. The South Vietnamese Government is assisted by over 460,000 U.S. servicemen (which General Westmoreland now wishes to increase to 600,000), over 40,000 South Koreans and 6,000 Australians. The U.S. has supplied an enormous armoury of modern weapons including well over 1,000 bombers and helicopters equipped with the most destructive non-nuclear bombs yet conceived.

4. North Vietnam and South Vietnam are not separate states. The Geneva Agreement of 1954 which terminated the war between the Viet Minh and the French, stated: "The military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary. . . . In order to ensure . . . that all necessary conditions obtain for the free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July, 1956, under the supervision of an international commission."



—Petty in *The Australian*.

"They make a wilderness and call it peace."—Tacitus, 100 AD.

In his *Memoirs*, Sir Anthony Eden writes: "The Viet Minh held out tenaciously for elections within six months and only after long and difficult negotiations eventually accepted the postponement to two years insisted upon by France and the United Kingdom."

The cease fire came about only after a firm agreement on holding unifying elections and agreement on the date of these elections. *These elections were to complete the war of independence which the Viet Minh had waged for eight years.* However, Diem, the President of South Vietnam, violated the Agreement and refused to hold the elections.

In his memoirs *Mandate for Change*, published in 1963, former President Eisenhower stated that had free elections been held in Vietnam, 80% of the population would have voted for Ho Chi Minh. The U.S. refused to support free elections in South Vietnam in 1956 because "we were sure we would lose them" according to John Gorge, Director of the Institute of International Studies, University of Oregon, who served for some years in the U.S. State Department.

Walter Lippmann, the internationally famous American newspaper columnist, the doyen of American political com-

mentators, whose column is published regularly in *Newsweek* and scores of newspapers, wrote in April, 1966: "South Vietnam is not a nation fighting for its independence against a foreign invader. South Vietnam is not now and has never been a separate nation. The people who are fighting in South Vietnam today are all of them Vietnamese, whether they are recruited in the South or infiltrated from the North. What is more, if there is any national South Vietnamese leader, his name is Ho Chi Minh. There is no comparable national leader in Saigon."

5. The Geneva Agreement provided that pending reunification neither zone was to form a military alliance with a foreign power nor offer it any military bases. No introduction of troop reinforcements or arms (apart from replacements) was permitted. Although the U.S. did not sign the Agreement it issued a statement pledging to take no action to violate the Agreement. However, in February, 1955, the U.S. took charge of the training and organisation of the South Vietnamese army, bringing into Saigon several hundred "military advisers". This was five years *before* the formation of the N.L.F. Between 1955 and 1960, U.S. military assistance to Diem's Government amounted to \$300 million per annum.

The reports of the International Control Commission show that the U.S. repeatedly violated the Geneva Agreement, noting "many instances of the arrival of U.S. military personnel and war materials in South Vietnam." The I.C.C. Sixth Interim Report says that from 1955 its authority was continually flouted by the Diem regime. "Broadly satisfactory co-operation" was received from the regime in the north.

6. Since the essential conditions of the Geneva Agreement had been breached — failure to hold elections, forming a military alliance with the U.S., receiving U.S. arms and training — South Vietnam could hardly expect North Vietnam to continue to respect the Geneva Agreement. As Anthony Randall, *The Australian's* defence correspondent, put it: "When a military struggle for power ends on the agreed condition that the competition will be transferred to the political level, can the side which violates the agreed conditions legitimately expect that the military struggle will not be resumed?"

In 1960, North Vietnam commenced small scale assistance to the newly-formed National Liberation Front. Gerald Stone in *War Without Honour* comments: "... to help the rebels entailed risks; to fail to help them was to acquiesce in the permanent partition of the country. Diem's declared policy of eventual liberation of the North also gave the Hanoi government a vested interest in aiding any attempt to topple his regime."

According to a U.S. State Department report issued in 1961, the Viet Cong did not use violence to try to overthrow the Government between 1954 and 1956. Thus it was not until the Diem refusal to hold elections as laid down in the Geneva Agreement that the revolution began.

7. Gerald Stone in *War Without Honour* comments: "In more and more districts local Communist sympathisers found themselves subject to Government harassment and arrest and their only choice was to submit or to flee into the jungle where they resumed the lives of guerillas. Government attempts to take over jurisdictions of Vietnam villages were met in some cases by armed resistance. Thus the Southern communists became increasingly involved in rebellious activity. . . ."

8. Commenting on the development of the revolution, Stone says: "The truth, as seen by almost all independent observers in South Vietnam from 1959 to 1962, was that the revolution grew as much from the failures of the government to recognise the needs of the population as it did from the success of the Communists. It was clearly the huge amount of American aid — \$300 million in 1954-55 alone — that kept the South Vietnam Government from crumbling in the first years of its existence and which allowed Diem to hold the dissidents in check until North Vietnam's intervention."

Edgar Snow, writer on China, stated: "It was not North Vietnam or even local communists but Diem who finally drove the whole countryside into rebellion."

Are we, then, fighting to protect South Vietnam from external aggression?

Myth C: We are fighting to contain China.

The Reality

1. All the troops fighting on the side of the Viet Cong are Vietnamese. There are no Chinese or nationals of other countries in South Vietnam on the side of the Viet Cong.

2. During Marshall Ky's visit to Australia he said that China was unlikely to send troops to Vietnam as "this would unite the people of the north and the south" so great was the hostility to any threat of Chinese occupation. Yet the Liberal Government election policy in November, 1966, said the Vietnam war was being fought to block the downward thrust of Chinese Communism.

The more America bombs North Vietnam, the more Ho Chi Minh is forced to seek China's assistance to help repair

the bomb damage and provide essential supplies. In this way the air raids appear to be achieving the very result which directly conflicts with U.S. interests and aims — particularly since the air raids have not achieved their intended objective of reducing the flow of men and equipment to the south.

3. U.S. criticism of China's moral and material support to North Vietnam involves much double thinking. For years the U.S. has been insisting on a sphere of influence over the whole of North and South America.

U.S. actions have involved incomparably more interference with the internal affairs of other states than is involved in China's assistance to her neighbour, North Vietnam — in response to massive U.S. intervention to thwart what appears to China as a popular revolution on China's border and to sustain in power an unpopular, violently anti-Chinese Government.

4. U.S. *Newsweek* of March 15th, 1965, claimed: "The Chinese navy is purely a defensive unit geared to operate in shallow waters, (and) . . . one of the striking facts about China's military establishment is that it is organised almost exclusively for defence rather than attack . . . after 16 years China has an amphibious force capable of landing only two battalions."

5. Australia's Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Hasluck, said on April 23rd, 1965, that there was "no foreseeable threat" of an invasion of Australia from any quarter." Indeed Australia's trade with China in wool, wheat and steel appears to indicate that the Government does not believe its public statements that the Vietnam war is part of the downward thrust of Chinese communism.

6. China, an industrially weak power quite incapable of sustaining any major military action against a well-armed power, is ringed with giant U.S. bases, nuclear aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines.

*Can we therefore claim we are fighting to contain China?
If not, why are we fighting?*

Myth D: We are fighting to contain Communism.

The Reality

1. Communism is an international ideology not controlled by either Moscow or Peking. The differences between the U.S.S.R. and China and between the U.S.S.R. and Rumania, Poland and Yugoslavia show that it is very far from being a monolithic ideology.



**IT'S YOUR
CHOICE:**

**WHERE
DO YOU
DRAW
THE LINE
AGAINST**

COMMUNIST AGGRESSION?

Liberal Party advertisement, Federal elections, November, 1966.

2. The National Liberation Front (normally referred to as the Viet Cong) is wholly indigenous to Vietnam and is composed mainly of South Vietnamese. Until the U.S. intervention in Vietnam was accelerated in 1963 the support it received from other communist countries was moral and ideological — not military.

3. Many leading members of the N.L.F. are not communist. The President of the N.L.F. was formerly a non-Communist Saigon lawyer. "The General Secretary is a Communist former Professor of History. The Central Committee includes representatives of the Buddhists, the Catholics, the tribes people, professional people and other non-Communists." (*Vietnam and Australia*, published by the N.S.W. University Study Group.)

4. Commenting on General Westmoreland's speech to Congress Senator Fulbright, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, said: "... to say that the war is simply aggression by communists is incorrect ... to say that it is not a civil war is quite inaccurate." (A.B.C., May 5th, 1967.)

On April 24th, 1967, U Thant stated: "The Vietnam war cannot be ended until everyone concerned realises the cause of the conflict is nationalism and not communism."

5. In *Life* of April 17th, 1967, there is a report of an interview between U.S. freelance photographer Lee Lockwood and Nguyen Van Tien, Hanoi representative for the N.L.F. The latter's comments to Lockwood in Hanoi are in strong conflict with the statements which the U.S. and Australian Governments have issued on this subject:

"South Vietnam will not, in the foreseeable future, be Communist. . . . After independence South Vietnam will be neutral. It will be nonaligned. . . . Eventually we will have a kind of light federation. But each part (of Vietnam) will administer its own internal and foreign affairs. Our position is completely different from that of North Vietnam as regards reunification. . . . The north must be willing to accept an overall government that is non-Communist. Communism is impossible for South Vietnam which has a much different tradition and situation than the north. . . . Even the Communists in our Front believe that Communism in the south is impossible."

6. The director of the Saigon School of Social Studies, Thich Nhat Hanh, speaking in Sydney on October 27th, 1966, said: "By backing the Ky regime the U.S. is destroying the main non-communist elements in the country. The longer the war goes on the more peasants are listening to the N.L.F. . . . The Vietnamese are now feeling hate towards the Americans and their allies. . . . The war is creating communists."

7. Apparently it is not communism as such which America wishes to fight. President Johnson recently stated that the U.S. had nothing to fear from the Soviet Union and that the concept of "peaceful co-existence" should be changed to "peaceful engagement".

8. In any case should the U.S., Australia and other countries restrict by military force other peoples' freedom to determine the form of society they wish to establish?

If we are not fighting to contain communism, what, then, are we fighting for?

I wish to make particular acknowledgement to *Vietnam and Australia* published by the University Study Group on Vietnam. This provides a detailed account of the history of Vietnam, the Geneva Conference and the events since the Geneva Conference. It can be obtained from 48 Milling Street, Gladsville, N.S.W.

Myth E: We are fighting to ensure a better life for the people of Asia.

The Reality

1. U.S. official figures show that the weekly average of killings of combatants last year was over 1,000. In many weeks this year the number has risen to over 3,000. In addition there is an estimated *at least* two civilian deaths for each combatant death as a result of the destruction of villages both in ground and air attacks by allied forces. This does not include deaths from air raids over North Vietnam.

The U.S. liberal monthly *Ramparts* in its January issue, 1967, commented: "Nearly two years ago, before the major U.S. escalation began in early 1965, Hugh Campbell, former Canadian member of the International Control Commission in Vietnam, said that from 1961 through 1963, 160,000 Vietnamese civilians died in the war. This figure was borne out by officials in Saigon. According to conservative estimates another 55,000 died during 1964 and 100,000 in each of the two escalated years since; that is at least 415,000 civilians have been killed since 1961." *Ramparts* goes on to explain that since 70% of residents of villages are under 16 (all able-bodied men over 16 are in the Viet Cong or the South Vietnamese army), "at least 250,000 of the children of South Vietnam have been killed."

2. *Ramparts* estimates, based on I.C.C. and other authoritative reports, that the number of *civilian* injuries is at least three times the number killed: that would amount to more than 1,240,000. And very many of these injuries are of a hideous nature. *Ramparts* claims that over 80% of injuries are due to U.S. fire power.

The director of the Saigon School of Social Studies, Thich Nhat Hanh, claims that for every injury admitted to hospital at least ten are not admitted. The hospitals are crammed with normally three persons to each bed. There is a pitiful shortage of doctors, nurses and all facilities. According to *Ramparts* conditions are so appalling in the hospitals that a great many serious infections occur in patients after they arrive in hospital. Newspapers are often used as sheets, blankets and bandages.

3. As an indication of the comparative level of destruction of life from the N.L.F. campaign against the Saigon Government, during 1964 the N.L.F. killed 436 hamlet chiefs and officials — an average of 8 per week. General Westmoreland,



One of the many thousands of Vietnamese children burned by napalm bomb attacks. Very few have received plastic surgery. Few get to hospital; of those who do many are too badly burned to receive treatment. The South Vietnamese Government has refused permission to several overseas organisations wishing to fly some



Madame Ky, who went to Japan for plastic surgery to her nose before visiting Australia in 1966.

of the children to Europe, Japan and America for treatment.

(photos from "Vietnam Action".)

the U.S. military commander in South Vietnam, in October, 1966, stated that between September 11th and October 23rd, 1966, "there have been 33 assassinations of Government officials" — an average of 5 per week. In April, 1967, U.S. officials in Saigon claimed that the Viet Cong had killed 11,967 civilians over the past nine years. This figure is well above that previously issued by U.S. officials.

4. U.S. air raids have burned to the ground hundreds of villages and destroyed with defoliant chemicals scores of thousands of acres of crops and forest. "A few sniper shots from a hut are sometimes enough to subject the entire (village) community to air attack or artillery fire." (Gerald Stone, *War Without Honour*.)

It seems that even the pretext of shots is not required for an attack. *The Sydney Morning Herald's* TV columnist Harry Robinson, reported on March 3rd, 1967:

"Bob Sanders interviewed a young Australian newsreel cameraman who had been working in Vietnam for the past two years. He explained how co-operative he had found the military.

"On a flight with an American crew, he asked if he could film a napalm attack. Certainly he could. They were flying over an area in which they were permitted open slather. After a radio check with base, they obliged him by wiping out a small settlement. There was no military purpose to the attack whatsoever. They just wanted to be neighbourly.

"The South Vietnamese Forces were even more helpful. At the sight of a camera they would invariably show their enthusiasm for the war by shooting prisoners; so the young man learned to keep his camera out of sight.

"He repeatedly complained of the way his material was censored in Australia, particularly by the A.B.C. He tried hard to film the war as he found it, and was angered to discover that virtually none of his atrocity footage had made it to air."

5. "The South Vietnamese know that there are now 300,000 of their own people who are refugees, driven from their homes by bombs and napalm — or threats of such attacks — directed entirely without discrimination against scattered and elusive bands of Viet Cong rebels in their midst." (Clare Hollingworth, *The Guardian* (London), May 7th, 1965.) According to Neil Sheehan who returned to the U.S. in 1966 after covering the war in Vietnam for three years for *The New York Times*: "The number of refugees has now passed the million mark. . . . They left their homes, they said, because they could no longer bear American and South Vietnamese bombs and shells." The A.B.C. news of April 22nd, 1967, reported that the number of refugees has now grown to 1,750,000. Most of these people live in crowded squalor without even the most primitive facilities. They have had to build their new homes from old boxes or galvanised iron.

6. Over North Vietnam normally each day between 100 and 500 planes are dispatched to destroy bridges, roads, railways, barges, ships, trucks, and any other moving object, as well as power stations and industrial plants. In addition, British, French and U.S. observers in North Vietnam have confirmed the heavy destruction of houses, schools, churches, hospitals and irrigation facilities.

Harrison Salisbury, Assistant Managing Director of *The New York Times* stated on December 27th, 1966, in Hanoi after travelling through North Vietnam: "President Johnson's announced policy that American targets in North Vietnam are steel and concrete rather than human lives seems to have little connection with the reality of attacks carried out by U.S. planes. . . . A notable example is the little town of Phuly about 35 miles south of Hanoi. The town had a population of about 10,000. In attacks last October 1st, 2nd and 9th,

every house and building was destroyed. The community had no industry but had the misfortune to be astride the highway and southward of the Hanoi railroad. . . . Another town . . . Namdinh, a textile centre 60 miles south of Hanoi (90,000 population) has been systematically attacked . . . no (military objective) has been claimed by U.S. communiques . . . block after block of ordinary housing has been smashed to rubble by repeated attacks. . . . (In) One deserted street almost every house was blasted last April 14th . . . 49 people were killed, 135 were wounded and 240 houses collapsed. . . . It is evident that U.S. planes are dropping an enormous weight of explosives on civilian targets. . . . A brief tour south of Hanoi shows that Phuly and Namdinh are far from exceptional"

Writing in his book *Behind the Lines*, Salisbury says: ". . . almost every rural agricultural community in the area had been hit at one time or another. One of the worst was an attack on the village of Kien Tiony in which 72 people were killed and 46 wounded. But attacks were not confined to villages. Individual peasants working in the fields or threshing in the courtyards had been strafed. . . . There were the thousands of tons of bombs that fell on the countryside, on the fields, on the villages, on the peasant huts, on the peasants in the fields and on the roads."

According to Canadian officials in North Vietnam the city of Vinh with a population of 60,000 was completely destroyed during 1966.

Lee Lockwood, a freelance U.S. photographer who travelled through North Vietnam for four weeks early in 1967, reported in *Life* of April 17th, 1967: "Although I had read the reports of other journalists . . . I was not prepared for the amount of U.S. bomb damage that I saw." Among his many stories of devastation are the following:

" . . . For perhaps 15 miles (south of Hanoi) nearly every house along the road lies in ruins." . . . "In Thanh Hoa, a large city, several neighbourhoods near the centre of town had been completely razed. . . . 'We consider that our city has ceased to exist' Thanh Hoa's mayor said to me sadly." . . . "Phat Diem is an agricultural community of 5,500, five miles inland . . . I was told the town had been attacked more than 60 times . . . the city, mostly mud and thatch huts or one-storey concrete dwellings was in ruins." . . . "I visited the hamlet of Antiem . . . (a bomb) fell in the local secondary school, killing, I was told, 30 children and a teacher."

"Much of the outrage against U.S. bombing is directed at the use of anti-personnel bombs — particularly the cluster bomb units — cannisters which burst in the air each scattering

300 baseball-sized explosives which detonate on impact, each spraying hundreds of pea-sized steel pellets at high velocity over a wide area. The pellets are coated with napalm and stick when they hit."

"They cannot destroy bridges or buildings; so they can only be intended to strike people. When they don't cause death they frequently cripple. Since each plane carries four canisters, it drops 360,000 pellets."

7. On April 20th, 1966, the U.S. Defence Secretary, Mr. McNamara, said it was planned to drop 638,000 tons of bombs on Vietnam during 1966. This, he said, was "a rate higher than that reached by all American bombers in North Africa and Europe during the last three years of World War II." On April 28th, 1967, the Pentagon announced that the current rate of dropping bombs on Vietnam was 77,000 tons per month (924,000 tons per annum), which compares with 80,000 tons per month dropped on *all targets in Europe* by all allied air forces at the peak of the bombing in World War II.

8. During his Australian tour President Johnson revealed that U.S. spending on the Vietnam war was at the rate of \$24,000 million per annum. *Fortune* magazine suggests that even this figure may soon be greatly exceeded. (This expenditure is 50% larger than Australia's entire national income for 1965-66.) By comparison, total U.S. expenditure on economic aid to the poor countries amounted to \$2,000 million for 1966—and this was reduced from \$2,500 million.

The enormity of U.S. expenditure on the Vietnam war and the extent to which the U.S. could help overcome poverty in Asia if this expenditure could be diverted to economic aid is indicated by the following comparisons: U.S. annual expenditure on Vietnam is approximately equal to the outlay on India's present Five Year Plan (India's population is over 500 million); it is almost equal to the total outlay on capital formation for the whole underdeveloped world in 1966; it is equal to 12 years of U.S. economic aid to the underdeveloped world.

Is the Vietnam war, then, helping to ensure a better life for the people of Asia?



Myth F: We are prepared to hold unconditional discussions for a settlement of the dispute.

The Reality

1. U.S. television commentator for the C.B.S. network, Eric Sevaried, shocked even many of President Johnson's Vietnam supporters in his revelation of November 30th, 1965. The late Adlai Stevenson, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. had told him that during 1964 U.N. Secretary General, U Thant, "privately obtained agreement from authorities in North Vietnam that they would send an emissary to talk with an American emissary, in Rangoon, Burma. Someone in Washington insisted that this attempt be postponed until after the Presidential election. When the election was over, U Thant again pursued the matter; Hanoi was still willing to send its man. But Defence Secretary Robert McNamara flatly opposed the attempt. . . ." This ended the prospect of negotiations. Yet at a Press conference in July, 1965, President Johnson said . . . "there has not been the slightest indication that the other side is interested in negotiation or in unconditional discussions. . . ." The associate editor of *The New York Times*, James Reston, commented on November 17th, 1965: "The Administration's first problem, is not how to talk to the North Vietnamese, but how to talk candidly to the American people."

2. Britain's liberal daily *The Guardian*, explained on April 9th, 1965, that President Johnson's offer of unconditional discussions in fact contains three conditions: first, the U.S. would not withdraw, to use the President's words "either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement"; second, South Vietnam could not be reunited with the North; and third, the U.S. would not negotiate with the N.L.F. As *Vietnam and Australia* points out, the first two of these conditions are incompatible with the Geneva Agreement. The third condition is clearly unacceptable to the N.L.F. which has been waging the campaign against the various Saigon Governments and U.S. military presence since 1960.

3. *Vietnam and Australia* quotes from the well known French journal, *Realités*, of May, 1964, where French writer Mowrer comments: "Already in September, 1963 I had been informed that President Kennedy had asked Averell Harriman to work on a plan of neutralisation by stages, beginning with the elimination of President Diem." *Vietnam and Australia* adds, "Vice-President Johnson had opposed this course, advocat-



—Petty in *The Australian*.

Peace Feelers

ing sterner measures against the Viet Cong. On November 22nd, 1963, Kennedy was assassinated and Johnson became President."

4. Gerald Stone comments in *War Without Honour*: "At the end of 1965 it appeared the U.S. was not interested in any peace settlement short of eliminating the N.L.F. in South Vietnam. . . . This was nothing approaching a compromise. It was asking surrender. Even if North Vietnam agreed to back off it was unlikely that the anti-government elements who lived permanently in the South would suddenly give up the territory they had gained at the cost of so much blood and would sign away their existence as a political movement."

Speaking before the Chicago Council of Foreign Relations on November 5th, 1965, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, William P. Bundy, castigated Hanoi for demanding "Acceptance of the Communists in a coalition government" — a demand he said "which we reject. . . ." (Sidney Lens in the U.S. monthly *The Progressive*, January, 1966.) And Marshall Ky on his return from the Manila Conference in November, 1966, declared that "he would never negotiate

with the N.L.F." Yet the N.L.F. controls areas (at night) inhabited by over 50% of the South Vietnamese population: during the day the N.L.F. withdraws from about half of these areas. (U.S. journalist Sidney Lens says in *The Progressive* that terror cannot explain how such large areas can be controlled "nor can it explain how the Viet Cong holds the loyalty of 120,000 irregulars (since increased) who fight for it only sporadically".)

6. Thich Nhat Hanh in an interview on the A.B.C.'s *Four Corners* on October 29th, 1966, claimed that the war in South Vietnam could be stopped immediately if a government were formed which desired peace and which represented the various non-communist groups in South Vietnam. It would have to be prepared to negotiate with the N.L.F. E. J. Hughes in *Newsweek* of May 30th, 1966, quotes a U.S. authority in Vietnam as admitting that "if any (freely) elected assembly sits in Saigon it will be negotiating with Hanoi in one week".

7. Writing in *The Progressive*, Sidney Lens observes: "A substantial section of the business community wants neither victory nor defeat but a continuation of the status quo which provides lush profits. A representative of the Industrial Development Centre explained with enthusiasm that anyone who wants to invest in industry is sure of a profit of 50 to 100 per cent. minimum. For the rich in the city, as for landlords and petty officials in the village, the war means boom conditions."

8. The U.S. violation of the U.N. Charter is unequivocal. Article 2 Section 4 says, "All members (of the U.N.) shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state." Article 33 states that parties to a dispute which is likely to endanger international peace shall first seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration or other peaceful means." Article 37 provides: "Should the parties to such a dispute fail to settle it by the means indicated they shall refer it to the Security Council." The U.S. has not done so.

Senator Wayne Morse, a member of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee writing in *The Progressive* of August, 1964, said the U.S. Administration's "theory is that the time to negotiate is when we have first dominated the battlefield. If that is to be our policy then we are helping to destroy the United Nations and all the advances in the rule of law in world affairs which it represents. Our moral position will be undermined and our capacity for calling others to account for breaches of the peace will be compromised."

9. *The Sydney Morning Herald* of March 10th, 1967, reported: "Arthur Schlesinger, Jun., now a history professor and one of the increasing number of liberal Democrats calling for a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam, said yesterday: 'The Administration wanted to delay peace talks for a few months so that North Vietnam could be further weakened by the bombing and more favourable terms could be pressed.'"

10. On several recent occasions the North Vietnamese Government has emphatically stated it is prepared to enter into negotiations if the U.S. halts the bombing of North Vietnam unconditionally. The U.S. Administration justifies its refusal to halt the bombing of North Vietnam without "reciprocal military moves" by Hanoi by saying that failure to continue the air raids "would imperil the lives of American boys".

Yet the Secretary of Defence, Mr. McNamara, who has all the reports of the Vietnam fighting available to him, recently stated before a joint session of two U.S. Senate Committees: "I don't believe that the bombing up to the present has significantly reduced, nor any bombing that I could contemplate in the future, would significantly reduce the actual flow of men and material to the South."

Furthermore, "while demanding that Hanoi cut off the flow of men and materials to the South, (the U.S.) Government insists on retaining its right to maintain the build-up of manpower and munitions on any level it chooses, despite the fact that we now command better than a 3 to 1 ratio in troops and a staggering advantage in firepower. What we are demanding, as the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* expressed it, is that 'Hanoi accept, as the price of ending the bombing, a position of static inferiority which could only end in surrender or ultimate defeat.'" (*The Progressive*, Wisconsin, April, 1967.)

11. According to Bernard Fall there have been definite responses from the North contrary to President Johnson's claims. Discussing Schurmann's *The Politics of Escalation*, Bernard Fall in *The New York Review* of February 9th, 1967, refers to "the disappearance of the 325th North Vietnamese Division from combat in the South in 1965 after Secretary Rush called for a 'sign' (from the North). The American response was, as a senior North Vietnamese official pointed out, more air raids. It is now clearly established", says Fall, "that there was a slowdown in infiltration during last year's bombing halt. On the American side, about 30,000 reinforcements arrived. I spent Christmas with U.S. Marines on the 17th parallel. U.S. patrols found few, if any, infiltrators; the same was true at New Year. But according to official announcements, the better part of a U.S. division went ashore during the truce."

Myth G: Australia's security depends on our Seato alliance with the U.S. and this alliance will be seriously weakened if we do not respond to the U.S. call for support.

The Reality

1. If the U.S. action is morally indefensible then Australian support for the U.S. is morally indefensible.

2. U.S. foreign policy — as with all nations — is determined according to what it considers to be her own interests; and this assessment will not be affected by sentiment. The U.S. opposed Britain's action over Suez and it lent support to the Sukarno regime in Indonesia despite Indonesia's demands over West Irian.

3. Australia is not even technically bound under Seato to lend support to the U.S. in Vietnam. The Geneva Agreement barred the countries of Indo China from forming outside military alliances. (The Geneva Agreement did not recognise South Vietnam as a separate state.) Thus neither the U.S. nor Seato could enter into a *formal* defence alliance with the South Vietnamese Government.

Furthermore, the Seato Treaty required the *unanimous* consent of the Seato Council to bring collective action under its protective clauses. However, there is no possibility of unanimity on South Vietnam because of the hostility of two members of the Seato Council — France and Pakistan — to U.S. involvement.

Other nations' assessment of the Vietnam war. Not one of the U.S. Nato allies is providing troops in Vietnam. Condemnation of U.S. policy in Vietnam has come from many areas and groups including the Indian Government, the French Government, a large section of the British Labor Party, the Japanese Socialists, and large numbers of academics throughout the world, particularly in the U.S.

Galbraith said in the address referred to above (see Myth A): "We must escape from the entrapment of our own propaganda. Vietnam is not important to us. Nor is it a bastion of freedom. Nor is it a testing place of democracy. . . . Had it been lost in 1954 no one would now be thinking of it. Far too many of our officials have been so persuaded because, much in the manner of a man shouting down a well they have heard their own voices."

Finally we should remember that President Johnson was elected on a policy of not becoming involved in an Asian war. In his election campaign on August 12th, 1964, he said: "Some others are eager to enlarge the Vietnam conflict. They call upon us to supply American boys to do the job that Asian boys should do. They ask us to take reckless action which might risk the lives of millions and engulf much of Asia and certainly threaten the peace of the entire world. Moreover such action would offer no solution at all to the real problem of Vietnam."

Postscript

Johnson's letter and Ho Chi Minh's reply:

On March 22nd, 1967, the North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry released an exchange of letters between President Johnson and President Ho Chi Minh during February. The letters were published in the Press on March 23rd. They are reproduced here because of the light they throw on the attitudes of the two leaders.

President Johnson's letter:

I am writing to you in the hope that the conflict in Vietnam can be brought to an end. The conflict has already taken a heavy toll—in lives lost, in wounds inflicted, in property destroyed, and in simple human misery.

If we fail to find a just and peaceful solution, history will judge us harshly.

Therefore, I believe that we both have a heavy obligation to seek earnestly the path to peace. It is in response to that obligation that I am writing directly to you.

We have tried over the past several years, in a variety of ways and through a number of channels, to convey to you and your colleagues our desire to achieve a peaceful settlement. For whatever reasons, these efforts have not achieved any results.

It may be that our thoughts and yours, our attitudes and yours, have been distorted or misinterpreted as they passed through these various channels. Certainly that is always a danger in indirect communication.

There is one good way to overcome this problem and to move forward in the search for a peaceful settlement. That is for us to arrange for direct talks between trusted representatives in a secure setting and away from the glare of publicity.

Such talks should not be used as a propaganda exercise but should be a serious effort to find a workable and mutually acceptable solution.

In the past two weeks, I have noted public statements by representatives of your Government suggesting that you would be prepared to enter into direct bilateral talks with representatives of the U.S.

Government, provided that we ceased "unconditionally" and permanently our bombing operations against your country and all military actions against it.

In the last days, serious and responsible parties have assured us indirectly that this is in fact your proposal.

Let me frankly state that I see two great difficulties .

In view of your public position, such action on our part would inevitably produce world-wide speculation that discussions were under way and would impair the privacy and secrecy of those discussions.

Secondly, there would inevitably be grave concern on our part whether your Government would make use of such action by us to improve its military position.

With these problems in mind, I am prepared to move even further towards an ending of the hostilities than your Government has proposed in either public statements or through private diplomatic channels.

I am prepared to order a cessation of bombing against your country and the stopping of further augmentation of U.S. forces in South Vietnam as soon as I am assured that infiltration into South Vietnam by land and sea has stopped.

These acts of restraint on both sides would, I believe, make it possible for us to conduct serious and private discussions leading toward an early peace.

I make this proposal to you now with a specific sense of urgency arising from the imminent New Year holidays in Vietnam.

If you are able to accept this proposal I see no reason why it could not take effect at the end of the New Year, or Tet, holidays.

The proposal I have made would be greatly strengthened if your military authorities and those of the Government of South Vietnam could promptly negotiate an extension of the Tet truce.

As to the site of the bilateral discussions I propose, there are several possibilities. We could, for example, have our representatives meet in Moscow where contacts have already occurred.

They could meet in some other country such as Burma.

You may have other arrangements or sites in mind, and I would try to meet your suggestions.

The important thing is to end a conflict that has brought burdens to both our peoples, and above all to the people of South Vietnam.

If you have any thoughts about the action I propose, it would be most important that I receive them as soon as possible.

Sincerely, Lyndon B. Johnson.

President Ho Chi Minh's reply:

Vietnam is thousands of miles away from the United States.

The Vietnamese people have never done any harm to the United States. But contrary to the pledges made by its representative at the 1954 Geneva conference, the U.S. Government has ceaselessly intervened in Vietnam.

It has unleashed and intensified the war of aggression in South Vietnam with a view to prolonging the partition of Vietnam and turning South Vietnam into a neo-colony and a U.S. military base.

For over two years now, the U.S. Government has, with its Air and Naval forces, carried the war to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, an independent and sovereign country.

The U.S. Government has committed war crimes, crimes against peace and against mankind.

In South Vietnam, half a million U.S. and satellite troops have resorted to the most inhuman weapons and the most barbarous methods of warfare, such as napalm, toxic chemicals and gases, to massacre our compatriots, destroy crops, and raze villages.

In North Vietnam thousands of U.S. aircraft have dropped hundreds of thousands of tons of bombs, destroying towns, villages, factories, roads, bridges, dykes, dams, and even churches, pagodas, hospitals, schools.

In your message you apparently deplored the sufferings and destruction in Vietnam. May I ask you: who has perpetrated these monstrous crimes? It is the U.S. and satellite troops.

The U.S. Government is entirely responsible for the extremely serious situation in Vietnam.

The U.S. war of aggression against the Vietnamese people constitutes a challenge to the countries of the Socialist camp, a threat to the national independence movement, and a serious danger to peace in Asia and the world.

The Vietnamese people deeply love independence, freedom and peace. But in the face of the U.S. aggression, they have risen up, united as one man, fearless of sacrifices and hardships.

They are determined to carry on their resistance until they have won genuine independence and freedom and true peace.

Our just cause enjoys strong sympathy and support from the peoples of the whole world including broad sections of the American people.

The U.S. Government has unleashed the war of aggression in Vietnam. It must cease this aggression. That is the only way to the restoration of peace.

The U.S. Government must stop definitely and unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, withdraw from South Vietnam all U.S. and satellite troops, recognise the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, and let the Vietnamese people settle their own affairs.

Such is the basic content of the four-point stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which embodies the essential principles and provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam. It is the basis of a correct political solution.

In your message, you suggested direct talks between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States.

If the U.S. Government really wants these talks, it must first of all stop unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

It is only after the unconditional cessation of the U.S. bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam that the two countries could enter into talks.

The Vietnamese people will never submit to force; they will never accept talks under the threat of bombs.

Our cause is absolutely just. It is to be hoped that the U.S. Government will act in accordance with reason.
Sincerely, Ho Chi Minh.

Comment:

President Johnson's statement that he is "prepared to order a cessation of bombing . . . as soon as I am assured that infiltration into South Vietnam by land and sea has stopped" according to many observers, including U Thant, rules out the possibility of negotiation. Ho Chi Minh would be unlikely to cut off all assistance to the N.L.F. First, the N.L.F. would regard this as a betrayal of their cause; it would thus strike a shattering blow at their morale. Second, with the staggering U.S. fire power in South Vietnam such an act would virtually guarantee the defeat of the N.L.F.

Ideas should lead to Action

When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall out one by one, an unpitied sacrifice, in a contemptible struggle.—Edmund Burke.

If this booklet's analysis has convinced you our involvement in the Vietnam war is wrong and should be stopped, please don't shrug your shoulders and say "what can I do?" Every person so convinced has a duty to his conscience to communicate to as many of his fellows as possible. A few thousand voices can soon snowball into hundreds of thousands. This is the only way Government policy can be changed. And the Australian Government does have an influence on U.S. policy.

To help communicate the truth about Vietnam will you purchase for sale or gift several copies of this booklet? The prices are listed below. The net proceeds will be used to further publicise the case against U.S.-Australian involvement.

Please send me 1 / 2 / 3 / 5

I enclose—

cash/stamps/cheque 20c/40c/60c/\$1

Post to:

H. Levien, 766 New South Head Rd., Rose Bay, N.S.W., 2029.

NAME:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE: