

Nick Hucsimov

# PL BOSTON NEWS

Vietnam { History of the war  
Its significance  
How to fight vs. it

Economics of Imperialism

PLP: Building a Revolutionary  
Working Class Movement

Confrontation at the Army Base

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"Historically, all reactionary forces on the verge of extinction invariably conduct a last desperate struggle against the revolutionary forces, and some revolutionaries are apt to be deluded for a time by this phenomenon of outward strength but inner weakness, failing to grasp the essential fact that the enemy is nearing extinction while they themselves are approaching victory."

Mao Tse-tung

PL BOSTON NEWS

(Editor's Note: The following is the draft of a Progressive Labor Party pamphlet on Vietnam. We're publishing it here before putting it out in booklet form so that our readers will have the chance to send us any criticisms and suggestions they may have.)

# VIETNAM

- THE CAUSES
- THE HISTORY
- THE SIGNIFICANCE

By now most Americans are against the Vietnam war. But these opponents' view of the war differ widely, and that means, in practice, that they fight against the war in very different, sometimes opposing ways.

Many see the war as a terrible blunder, a foolish departure from an otherwise basically sound policy by men doped with their own anti-communism. Thus the present administration's fear of losing face supposedly keeps the U.S. in Vietnam. This approach sees Johnson as a vicious man, or a tool of crazed generals, or a fool - or maybe all three. People of this opinion usually hope for the election of some sensible person, Kennedy or McCarthy, with the courage to bring peace to a war-torn world.

, We disagree.

We don't see the Vietnam war as an exception to U.S. foreign policy. On the contrary, crushing revolutions around the world has been, especially since World War Two, the main content of U.S. foreign policy. In our view, that policy is not the result of a few presidents' fanaticism, but stems from the needs of American capitalism to maintain a strong military/political grip on the world in order to satisfy economic needs of the system. What is necessary is not to change presidents. All the presidential candidates are firmly tied to Imperialism, and only differ on how best to defeat the Vietnamese revolution. Their campaigns can only trick people honestly opposed to the Vietnam war into boosting the particular fortunes of one group of imperialists over another. This makes more difficult the job of building a movement to develop an understanding among working people and students of the real causes of the war and its relation to all the other ways the system screws them, a movement to lead them in fighting their real enemies, the class of men who benefit from Imperialism.

But this requires more discussion. Before considering further what caused the Vietnam war and how best to oppose it, we should be clear on what actually happened in Vietnam.

\* \* \* \* \*

Vietnam is a country in which 90% of the people are peasants. Not long ago, a handful of landlords owned most of the land and extorted over half the peasants' crop as rent, while the majority of peasants owned no land at all or too little for subsistence.

For over a century, a series of foreign imperialist powers - France, Japan, and now the United States - in alliance with the Vietnamese landlord class have oppressed and exploited the people of Vietnam.

Since WW II, however, the Vietnamese people, led by Communist revolutionaries, have been waging a people's war against these real oppressors, a war fought by and for the peasant and working class and their allies against foreign domination and class oppression. The nature of their struggle can be summed up in the following lines by a Washington Star reporter:

The Saigon ...government and the mass of peasantry still seem to be on the opposing sides...Land is of such paramount importance here that the Viet Cong allow only the landless or very poor farmers to command guerrilla units or qualify as party members. The provincial government's social order is the exact reverse. Most of the military officers, civil servants and community leaders come from the landowning gentry. The same is true in Saigon. (Washington Star, 1/24/67)

In Vietnam the U.S. controls a government of the rich to fight the poor.

#### THE FRENCH IN VIETNAM

French colonialism never entirely succeeded in "pacifying" Vietnam. Revolts and sporadic banditry punctuated the entire period of French colonial rule, which began in the mid-19th century and lasted until 1954.

During the 1920's and '30's, organized opposition to French rule mounted. French economic exploitation was undermining the population's ability to survive. French capitalists prevented the development of any Vietnamese industry and set up vast plantations of rubber, rice and other commercial agricultural products. They strengthened the concentration of landownership in the hands of a small landlord class and turned members of this mandarin class into colonial civil servants.

Many of these mandarins grew restless under French domination. They wanted a bigger share of the wealth being sucked out of the masses of Vietnamese working people. These so-called "moderate nationalists" wrangled with the French for years. But they never aimed at kicking the French out of Vietnam. That would have required arousing and organizing the masses of Vietnamese, whom they feared more than the French. These are the same "nationalists" who are today collaborating with the United States. Only the Communists were firmly committed to organizing the Vietnamese people to destroy colonial rule.

## THE RISE OF THE VIETMINH

After France fell to the Nazis in 1940, the French colonialists in Indochina gave control of the area to Japan, but continued to administer it for the Japanese. The Japanese imperialists extracted thousands of tons of rice from Vietnam during WW II to feed their home population. An estimated 2,000,000 Vietnamese died of starvation during the war.

As in other countries in Asia and Europe, however, a revolutionary movement developed against the fascists. By the time of the Japanese surrender, the Vietminh had liberated several provinces from their control. Supported strongly by much of the population, the Vietminh had liberated several provinces from their control. Supported strongly by much of the population, the Vietminh administration soon controlled most of the country. On September 2, 1945, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam declared its independence.

At Potsdam, British forces were chosen to enter southern Vietnam and Chiang Kai-Shek's Kuomintang forces were to occupy northern Vietnam, in order to disarm the Japanese.

But the British proceeded, along with the Japanese troops they were supposed to disarm, to attack the Vietminh and drive them out of Saigon and other areas. This paved the way for the return of French troops.

Faced with French, who were supported by Japanese, Kuomintang and British troops, and a ravaged country, Ho Chi Minh concluded a compromise agreement with the French. Using this as a cover, in 1946 the French continued their build-up until, in November, they carried out a naval bombardment of Haiphong which killed 6,000.

This marked the beginning of the French-Indochinese War which ended, 8 years later, in a decisive French defeat.

## THE U.S. LENDS A HAND

The U.S. government, under both Truman and Eisenhower, supported France's attempted reconquest of Indochina. Beginning in 1947, a substantial portion of Marshall Plan aid went to underwrite the French war effort in Indochina. In 1949, after the Chinese people's victory over the U.S.-backed Chiang Kai-shek, the U.S. stepped up its aid. And in 1950, following the outbreak of the Korean War, the U.S. set up a military mission in Vietnam and further expanded aid to the French. During the subsequent period, from 1950-54, U.S. aid to the French totaled about \$2 billion.

By 1954 the U.S. was paying about 80% of the French costs of the war!

But this immense U.S. aid, used to supply the best modern equipment, and the hundreds of thousands of troops the French poured in could not defeat the Vietminh. The revolutionaries liberated most of the countryside, carried out land reform, and isolated the French in outposts and hostile cities. Trying to counter vast Vietminh

support, the French made a series of rather pitiful attempts at disguising the colonial character of their war. They "officially" bestowed independence on their puppet Emperor Bao Dai several times. The U.S. government welcomed the emergence of this "nationalist alternative."

By early 1954 the French forces were exhausted; and while French armies were tied down in Vietnam, unrest was flaring in Algeria and other colonies. In his memoirs, Dwight Eisenhower summed it up this way:

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. I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indo-Chinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held as of the time of the fighting, possibly 80% of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader rather than...Bao Dai...the mass of the population supports the enemy. (Mandate for Change, p. 373)

U.S. Imperialism had suffered major defeats in China and Korea; it was headed for another in Vietnam. Having managed to hold onto the southern half of Korea and the island of Taiwan, now it had to find a strategy for salvaging something in Vietnam.

#### STRATEGY FOR IMPERIALISM: 1954

In mid-March, 1954, the French told Washington that their position at Dien Bien Phu, the stronghold in northern Vietnam, was very bad. The war was not worth it; they intended to negotiate an end. The U.S. government responded with what the New York Times' James Reston called a "fundamental policy decision," spelled out by Sec'y of State John Foster Dulles in a key policy address: The "imposition" of communism on Southeast Asia "by whatever means" would not be accepted by the U.S., he said, but would be countered with "united action." (New York Times, 3/30/54)

The U.S. could institute "united action" two ways. First, it could take over the main burden of fighting the Vietminh by sending in U.S. and allied troops. Second, it could use diplomatic efforts to obtain a deal to halt the fighting, thereby giving the U.S. an opportunity to build a U.S. controlled "Vietnamese" army to resume the war against the Vietminh.

The powerful businessmen who in our estimate run this country, and the politicians who serve them, were split over this issue, much as they are divided today over escalation vs. negotiations.

In 1954, "hawks" like V-President Nixon argued that:

...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)

On the other hand, "doves" like Sen. John F. Kennedy argued that:

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. (Robert Scheer, How the US Got Involved in Vietnam, p. 15)

Therefore, the U.S. should get the French to grant "independence" to Vietnam, form a government under Ngo Dinh Diem which excluded the Vietminh, support that government's army, and "Whenever necessary... /make/ some commitment of our manpower." (Scheer, ibid.)

Both recognized that the Vietminh was supported by the vast majority of Vietnamese and therefore that the U.S. had to intervene to control the area. They differed only about how best to mix "diplomatic" and "military" tactics to achieve the agreed on aim of defeating the Vietnamese people.

Generally speaking, the "doves'" tactics were used. American troops were not sent to Indochina. Instead, as the New York Times reported as early as March 22, 1954:

The United States is financing the organization of a large Vietnamese Army. It is training Vietnamese pilots in the Phillippines...It is not only willing but eager to take on some of the responsibilities for training the Vietnamese armies.

This was before the French had officially left Vietnam. By the end of June, the U.S. had spelled out the terms of what it would regard as an acceptable settlement very explicitly. These terms, contained in an Anglo-American communique sent to the French after a visit to Washington by British Prime Minister Churchill and Foreign Sec'y Anthony Eden, were as follows:

- 1) The settlement must preserve Imperialist control at least in the southern half of Vietnam;
- 2) It must not impose on the Imperialists any measures that would restrict their ability to set up an anti-communist regime in the south;
- 3) It must not contain any provision for elections that would risk the loss of the remaining half of Vietnam to Communist control. (Anthony Eden, Full Circle, pp. 132-133)

The U.S. had decided to try for a negotiated settlement - a deal - whereby the Vietminh would withdraw from the southern part of Vietnam and the U.S., replacing the French, would install and consolidate

a southern regime and finally, reconquer the north.

### THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS

The actual terms of the Geneva Agreements, signed July 21, 1954, did not coincide with the United States' wishes. The importation of arms and military advisers was prohibited; Vietnam was divided temporarily into two military demarcation zones, to allow the regroupment of Vietminh forces in the north, and French forces in the south; this division was to end in 1956 with free elections throughout Vietnam to unify the nation; in the meantime, both zones were to maintain strict neutrality and enter no military alliances; no reprisals were to be taken against pro-Vietminh or pro-French forces in either zone. (See Marvin E. Gettleman, Vietnam: History, Documents and Opinions, pp. 137-154)

Pres. Eisenhower remarked at a news conference July 21 that:

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)

Two days later, Sec'y of State Dulles made clear exactly how he wanted them to work out in practice:

One of the good aspects of the Geneva Conference is that it advanced the truly independent status of southern Viet Nam...The important thing is to seize the future opportunity to prevent the loss in northern Viet Nam from leading to the extension of communism..." (New York Times, 7/24/54)

In other words, if some of the Agreements' provisions were violated, the U.S. could try to build an anti-communist regime in the south and cancel the 1956 elections thus preventing "the extension of communism."

What was this Communism of which Dulles was so afraid really like?

A few months after the Geneva settlement, the extremely anti-Communist reporter Joseph Alsop travelled through Vietminh-controlled areas in southern Vietnam, south of Saigon:

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...The Vietminh could not possibly have carried on the resistance for one year, let alone nine years, without the people's strong, united support. Relying almost entirely on their own resources, these Southern Vietnamese peasants had tremendous success. 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, as Alsop was forced to admit ("I would like to be able to report - I had hoped to report - that...I saw all the signs of misery and oppression", Alsop, New Yorker, ibid.) in the wide areas of southern Vietnam which had been liberated from the French by the Vietminh, a thorough-going social revolution had taken place. The landlords, most of whom had long since fled to the cities, had been expropriated, were no longer the ruling class in the countryside. But, although their power was broken, the U.S.-created Diem regime was to give them one more chance for a come-back. As soon as the ink was dry on the Geneva Agreements, the U.S. set about carrying out a counter-revolution in the south.

The U.S. war against Vietnam began in 1954. It has gone on ever since. This struggle can be divided into three stages - first, from 1954 until 1960, when the U.S. tried to consolidate an anti-communist regime under Ngo Dinh Diem in the south; second, from 1960 until 1965, when the U.S. tried, through "special war", to defeat the Vietnamese anti-imperialist revolution, using mostly "native" forces; third, from 1965 to the present, marked by the bombing of the north and the massive invasion of U.S. troops in the south.

THE U.S. TRIES - AND FAILS -  
TO CREATE AN ANTI-COMMUNIST REGIME  
1954-1960

U.S. strategy in Vietnam was to consolidate an anti-communist government in the south as a base for anti-revolutionary operations throughout Southeast Asia. But first of all it needed an anti-communist dictator to lead southern Vietnam so that, responding to his call, it could help him preserve democracy. Therefore, during the Geneva Conference, the U.S. asked the French to have their Vietnamese "Emporer" Bao Dai appoint Ngo Dinh Diem as Prime Minister of the so-called State of Vietnam. How was Diem chosen? Look magazine summed it up as follows:

Sec'y of State John Foster Dulles picked him, Sen. Mike Mansfield endorsed him, Francis Cardinal Spellman praised him, Vice-President Richard M. Nixon liked him, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower O.K.'d him.  
(Look, Jan. 28, 1965)

As the Look quote indicates, Diem's support lay not among the Vietnamese people, but in the U.S. government. He was definitely not the father of his country, but rather the employee of his boss. ←

But the United States government had only created a popular leader. It still had to find him a following and a government to run the show.

IMPERIALISM BUILDS A NATION

Academic apologists for the U.S. role in Vietnam refer to the effort beginning in 1954 to impose Diem on southern Vietnam as "nation-building." In fact, the immense oppression and suppression which this "construction" installed led the south Vietnamese once

more to rebellion.

### BUILDING A BASE BY FRAUD AND BRIBERY

To produce "support" for its Diem regime, the U.S. began to pour aid directly to Diem instead of to the French shortly after the Geneva Conference. On Aug. 21, 1954, the New York Times reported that the U.S. was trying to get the French to turn U.S. supplied arms over to the fledgling Diem army. Using the threat of withholding weapons and money, the U.S. brought the army into line with Diem; in similar fashion, Diem distributed more than \$12 million to Cao Dai and Hoa Hao religious sect leaders as bribes. This technique - huge quantities of aid to keep the army in line and buy off a small sector of the population - was used throughout the first stage. Thus from 1955 to 1960 the U.S. foreign aid program, which paid practically all the operating expenses of the Diem government, totaled almost \$2 billion. 3/4 went to the military budget. The small part that went to the non-military "commodity-imports program" had as its main purpose, according to John Montgomery, an expert on U.S. foreign aid programs, to provide:

a political instrument for generating support for the Diem regime. A plentiful supply of consumer goods would provide the middle class (army officers, civil servants and small professional people) with goods they wanted and could afford to buy. (Scheer, pp. 50-54)

In short the aid program was a boon to the middle class and the wealthy. It was of no use to the peasants and the urban working class.

As part of the program of manufacturing support for Diem, the U.S. decided that:

The first phase in the program is to transport and help care for every North Vietnamese who wants to be evacuated to South Vietnam. (New York Times, Aug. 21, 1954)

Approximately 900,000 northern refugees were so moved from the north and resettled in southern Vietnam from '54-55. As the American government sees it, these people "voted with their feet" against Communism, thus demonstrating the unpopularity of the demonic Vietminh. Actually, this wasn't the way it happened at all:

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: often entire parishes were led south by a priest. The rest were mostly the families of soldiers and civil servants who had sided with the French against their own people's struggle for independence. Only 1% of the non-Catholic population left north Vietnam.

The U.S. spent nearly \$100,000,000 on this program. (Fall, ibid., and George Kahin and John Lewis)

To strengthen Diem's armed force, as the core of his U.S.-bestowed government, the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), which had existed in Vietnam since 1950, was expanded. MAAG rebuilt the Saigon regime's army into a force of 150,000 and, in addition, established a Self-Defense Corps (local militia) of 40,000. Their equipment and payroll were taken care of entirely by the United States. A 50,000 man Civil Guard was trained as well - not, however, by MAAG, but by MSUG, the Michigan State University Group. MSUG played a key role during the early years of the Diem regime, as Ramparts magazine has documented. MSUG consisted of a team of professors, experts in police training and administration. There were also several C.I.A. agents; the group was supposed to provide them with "cover". MSUG trained not only the Civil Guard but also Diem's Palace Guard, the secret police and the rest of the internal security apparatus and systematized the keeping of dossiers, taught finger-printing and other security techniques.

Thus from 1954-55, the U.S. was able to create in Vietnam a vast repressive apparatus, complete with a large modernized army, police force, Vietnamese Bureau of Investigation, civilian bureaucracy, and a fair number of people bought, coerced or fooled to function as instruments of U.S. government aims. With this arsenal, and keeping in reserve the money, manpower and technique of America, the U.S. government's Diem regime, consolidated for the moment in the cities, attacked the rural population.

#### COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Looking at the situation in early 1955, the New York Times said:

'A political battle more significant than Dienbienphu is being fought in Vietnam. The United States, with all its prestige, is actively engaged...What exists in Vietnam is a barren dictatorship...Ngo Dinh Diem doesn't dare install political freedom...General Collins...the real boss here, has been given the job of sweeping out an Augean stable with a wisk-broom...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. Nobody likes to talk about this. But when the time to admit it arrives a grave crisis must inevitably develop. (New York Times, 3.12.55) (Our emphasis)

In other words the U.S. had to expand its control to the vast strongholds of Vietminh support in the countryside, or else, when it announced there would be no elections, as it already planned to do, - in fact, as we saw earlier, as it had planned to do even before the Geneva Agreements were signed! - when it announced the cancellation of elections the Vietnamese people might well rise up against the Diem regime, and destroy the whole fragile enterprise before it

had been fully consolidated. The time to destroy Vietminh influence in the countryside was now!

But what was the basis of this influence? Obviously, one aspect was actual members of the Vietminh. As provided for by the Geneva Agreements, the Vietminh armies had regrouped in the north in 1954 to await the 1956 elections when the country was supposed to be reunited. Of course, many Vietnamese who'd worked with the Vietminh still remained in the south - they had never been part of the Vietminh army.

In mid-1955, the Diem government launched an "Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign", intended to seek out, intimidate, and kill the Vietminh sympathizers and former organizers. Thus all Vietnamese who had opposed French colonial rule were now declared enemies of the Saigon regime. By 1956 roughly 50,000 people were in jails, "re-education centers", and concentration camps. An ordinance of Jan., 1956, gave Diem a free hand to eliminate opposition. Anyone considered a threat to "the defense of the state and public order" could be thrown in jail. The notorious Law 10/59, passed in May, 1959, took this even further: special, travelling military courts were created; they could sentence anyone to death if they judged him a threat to "the security of the State."

But the Diemist terror was not just a matter of isolated attacks on remnants of the Vietminh organization. It was more than a terror directed by ideological fanatics against radical individuals - although, of course, the targets were often individuals. It was in fact a class terror.

In much of South Vietnam the Vietminh had carried out thorough land reform. The big landlords had fled or were driven out and hundreds of thousands of peasant families had taken possession of the land they worked. For the first time in their lives, the peasants didn't have to pay up to 2/3 of their crop as rent to a landlord. For the first time they, not the landlords and the various foreigners they had served at different times, decided what happened on the village level. The basic source of Vietminh support in the countryside was the fact that they had led a revolution - a peasant revolution - against precisely the forces whom the U.S. had now restored to power in Saigon.

To break Vietminh influence, this revolution had to be reversed.

Therefore the U.S.-controlled Diem regime began a series of social and economic programs aimed at restoring landlord class rule in the countryside, programs devised and pushed by American "advisers." The implementation of these programs required the terror Diem used more and more.

Most important was the so-called Land Reform. Drawn up by two U.S. "experts", Wolf Ladejinsky and Price Gittinger, this "reform" had an unusual character. Most land reforms are supported by peasants and opposed by landlords, right? But as Gittinger wrote in 1960:

As implementation began in early 1955, an interesting paradox in landlord and tenant attitudes emerged. Much of Free read: U.S.-controlled Viet-Nam had either

recently been recovered from Communist control, or Viet-Minh forces still retained paramount influence. In these areas, particularly those in southern-most south Viet-Nam, landlords had sometimes not collected rent for as long as eight years. Therefore, landlords looked upon the...program as a means to assure them a rental of at least 25% of the crop. On the other hand tenants in these areas resisted the program, since they had been paying no rent at all. (Richard Lindholm, ed., Vietnam - The First Five Years, p. 202)

The "reform" took land back from the peasants and returned it to the landlords. No wonder the peasants hated it and the landlords supported it.

Officially, the Ladejinsky-Gittinger plan stipulated that landlords could not own more than 100 hectares (about 250 acres) of rice land and could not charge rents over 25% of the annual crop. Also, land confiscated from departed French owners and large Vietnamese Landlords would supposedly be sold to the peasants, who were to pay in six annual installments, each amounting to from 1/3 to 2/3 of their crop.

In practice, almost no land was confiscated from the big owners. The formerly French-owned land went to Catholic immigrants from the North; the idea was to settle "loyal" peasants in otherwise hostile areas. The 25% ceiling on rent was taken by the landlords as a guaranteed minimum rent; they soon reverted to pre-revolutionary rates of 50-60% of crop per year.

The millions of peasants who officially owned no land or less than a hectare got nothing but the return of landlords and reimposition of high rents. If a peasant did try to buy land, the high yearly charge meant he would probably default on payment. The penalty was forfeiture of any previous payments and loss of the land.

On top of all this, the returning landlords often sought to collect back rents for the years when the Vietminh led peasants had kept them away from "their" land.

It is important to see that these anti-revolutionary measures were not a series of "mistakes" made by the U.S.-Diem forces. First, they corresponded completely to the interests of those people in Vietnam, the landlords and those who served the French, who in fact constituted Diem's (very shaky, largely bribed or terrorized) base of support. More important, it was clear to the U.S. that most Vietnamese were pro-Vietminh, with only the old ruling class willing to side with the Americans. Therefore, in order to transform Vietnam into the anti-communist bastion which the U.S. government wanted to create, the peasant revolution had to be reversed. The interests of Imperialism required the resurrection of the semi-feudal rulers.

But the fact that the U.S. had to reverse the rural revolution to consolidate its rule by no means meant that it could reverse that revolution. The Vietnamese people had made a revolution before. They could do it again.

## THE VIETNAMESE FIGHT BACK

The U.S.-Diem forces had launched their counter-revolution in the countryside. Hoping they had overwhelmed the people, they now laid the basis for cancelling the 1956 elections mandated by the Geneva Accords.

Thus, in 1955 Diem again and again refused Hanoi's request to begin consultations on the elections. Instead, he announced in July, 1955, that there would be a referendum that October. The South Vietnamese would be able, then, to choose between him - the U.S. Government's puppet - and the French marionette Emperor Bao Dai. In what all observers agree was one of the most fraudulent elections ever rigged, Diem credited himself with a modest 98.2% of the vote. This was pretty good, considering that his "land reform" and anti-communist programs had made Diem the most hated man in Vietnam.

The only American complaint expressed was that a 60% vote would have looked better. (Life, 5/13/57)

What were Diem's public reasons for cancelling the elections? The U.S. and its government in Saigon stated that the conditions for "free" elections could not possibly exist in the Communist-run north. But almost all observers agreed that the Vietminh could have accepted any form of neutral supervision. Its majority in both north and south was assured. And Hanoi repeatedly stated its willingness to accept neutral supervision.

The Diem-U.S. idea of a free election - e.g. the referendum in October, 1955 - was one they would be sure to win.

The Vietnamese did not take these attacks on their well-being and independence - this massive attempt at reversing the revolution and achieving U.S.-anti-Communist control of their country - they did not take these attacks passively. They fought back, in a scattered and uncoordinated way at first, better organized and united as time went on.

Massive opposition against Diem's phony referendum developed in late 1955. Mass meetings and demonstrations continued into 1956, protesting the cancellation of elections. These actions resulted in wholesale arrests and imprisonments.

In the countryside the peasants fought back against the return to political and economic power of the landlords, the vicious raids of the army and police who were sent to punish them when they resisted renewed landlord control, the political repression of Vietminh sympathizers, and the forced resettlement of whole villages and hamlets, either because the villagers had caused "trouble" or because some Diemist official wanted the land for himself.

A clear picture of broad-based revolt began to emerge as early as 1957-58. Bernard Fall analyzed the increasingly violent struggle in the south Vietnamese countryside in the Sept., 1958, Pacific Affairs. Fall sketched two maps. One showed the geographic distribution of violations by Diem of the Geneva Agreements prohibiting reprisals against Vietminh sympathizers, as reported by the International Control Commission set up at Geneva. The other showed the geographic distribution of reported revolutionary actions - raids, ambushes, assassinations of Diemist officials, etc. The two maps were almost identical. The attempt by the U.S. and



"Bamboo spikes for revenge"

Painting in ink and color

Diem to smash popular support the the Vietminh in the countryside had led to renewed rebellion.

As t insurgency grew in late 1957 through 1958, Saigon responded with more repression. Philippe Devillers, the French historian on Vietnam, put it this way:

In 1958 the situation grew worse . . . The people began to fight back. Informers were sought out and shot in increasing numbers, and village chiefs who had presided over the denunciations, village notables and members of the militia who took part were frequently treated in the same way . . . . 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 . . . . And in that fateful year of 1958 they overstepped all bounds. ("The Struggle for Unification of Vietnam", China Quarterly, Jan.-Mar. 1962, reprinted in Marvin Gettleman, ed., Vietnam, pp. 210-235.)

Diemist atrocities became a daily occurrence; more and more south Vietnamese had friends and relatives who had been arrested, beaten, tortured, perhaps murdered by the U.S.-Diem regime.

A greatly understated picture of conditions in the Diemist prisons was offered on January 3, 1958, by Tran Ngoc Ban, a member of Parliament:

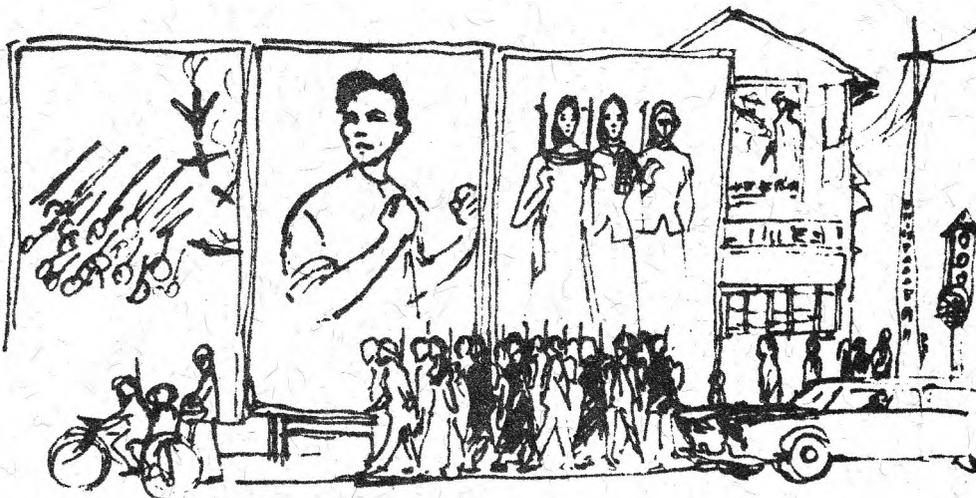
Let us take one room among so many others at the Gia Dinh prison, 45 feet long by a little under 11 feet wide. In this area are generally packed 150 detainees . . . there is room for three persons per square meter . . . . A bucket with a lid is put in the corner of the room to serve as a toilet . . . . It suffices that each of the 150 prisoners uses it once a day for five minutes and the bucket would remain open over 12 hours . . . . Now let us speak of possibilities for sitting or lying down . . . . Squatting they have just enough room. they can just sleep lying with their knees under their chin . . . . Because of the sweltering heat m . . . many detainees are unable to bear wearing a garment and remain half-naked. They must live day and night in this room and only go out into the courtyard once a day for a meal, which is taken outside even in rainy weather. Medicines hardly exist. (Quoted in Wilfred G. Burchett, The Furtive War, p. 48.)

Tran Ngoc Ban was arrested after making this statement. Compared to some of Diem's concentration camps, the prison he described is a model of enlightenment.

For example, in December, 1958, a large number of prisoners in the Phu Loi concentration camp died of "food poisoning"; incidents like this further infuriated the people. The base of the rebellion broadened continuously.

By March, 1959, Diem was forced to admit that South Vietnam was "at war."

This official recognition of the developing revolution was a complete reversal of Washington's earlier stand. Thus, between 1954 and 1959, the American people were told that Diem's was one of the most stable and democratic regimes in Asia and that the dictatorial communists had been virtually eliminated. A good part of this propaganda campaign was pushed by a group formed to back Diem in 1955, the so-called American Friends of Vietnam. Its founding members included Sen. John F. Kennedy, Arthur Schlesinger, Norman Thomas (!), Leo Cherne, Joseph Buttinger and Monsignor Harnett. (The last three were heads of the International Rescue Committee and the Catholic Relief Service, which pulled off the "exodus" of Catholics from northern to southern Vietnam.) This group hired a high-powered public relations firm to extoll Diem's "accomplishments."



A street in Hanoi  
Sketch

### THE MYTH OF NORTH VIETNAMESE AGGRESSION

The U.S. Government has always maintained publicly that it is answering the call of the Vietnamese people, who have been attacked by foreign (north Vietnamese) aggressors. Let us pause here a moment and consider this argument - constituting, as it does, the main justification for the U.S. war.

We have already seen that the U.S. commitment to Vietnam was entirely self-created. The Diem government which "invited" the U.S. in was itself the product of U.S. power - and presence - in Vietnam.

Moreover, the argument that the war is between north and south is an insult to the southern Vietnamese. Given the ferocious attack which Saigon had made on the lives and living conditions of the Vietnamese people, they would have had to be complete cowards or devoid of all feeling not to rebel. Nobody had to "aggress" the Vietnamese, who had fought Japanese and French for 14 years before the U.S. took over, to make them fight back against this oppression.

Had the U.S. and Diem really believed they were resisting a northern invasion, an attack on the people of the south, they would simply have armed the peasants to defend themselves. In fact, the opposite approach was taken. Thus Diem abolished local elections in 1956, making

village officials appointive. The reason for this was clearly that the villages would most likely have elected Vietminh fighters as their leaders. (Kahin and Lewis, p. 104) The repressive apparatus and the intense internal persecution, linked with the anti-peasant, counter-revolutionary rural programs aimed at restoring landlord rule - these showed that the U.S. and Diem knew the enemy was internal, that the people were against them. Indeed, as the rebellion grew more intense, Saigon began, in 1959, the first of a series of programs aimed at "separating the people from the guerrillas." These schemes, which culminated in the 1962 "Strategic Hamlet" plan, showed that the only "outside" attack being made on the people came from Saigon - or, more precisely, from the U.S. Government.

Not only was the war not caused by a "northern invasion" - more, most writers agree that the North Vietnamese advised their southern compatriots against initiating armed resistance in the late 1950's. Both Douglas Pike, former chief intelligence specialist for the USIA in Saigon, and George Kahin, "dovish" political scientist, argue that the insurrection in the south began at the grass roots; both cite North Vietnamese statements and broadcasts and southern rebel documents to prove this point.

Even if Kahin and Pike are wrong, if the North Vietnamese did encourage the rebellion in the south, this would hardly have been "aggression." The people of northern and southern Vietnam had agreed to stop fighting and to allow a temporary division of their country on the condition that national elections would be held. When, after brutally attacking the southern people, the U.S.-sponsored Diem regime reneged on this agreement, they had every right to resume the fight anyway they chose.

During the period we've been discussing, the North Vietnamese were in fact primarily engaged in the economic reconstruction of the northern half of their country. They carried out land reform, greatly increased agricultural yields, expanded medical and educational facilities, and began a program of industrialization. Western writers on North Vietnam generally concede that the standard of living rose after 1954 and that the Hanoi government continued to be popular. Visitors to North Vietnam during the past three years have all reported tremendous popular support for the government and a grass-roots determination to resist the U.S. government's aggression.

During the 50's the North Vietnamese also managed to reduce economic dependence on outside aid. By the early 60's they were largely self-sufficient. In these and other ways, comparisons between the two zones clearly favor the North. The American Government's claim that the North attacked the South because it wanted to wreck that showplace of democracy is a fairy tale. In fact, North Vietnam was and continues to be the only country in Southeast Asia that is making notable progress toward industrialization and that has a genuinely popular government. (See Fall, pp. 169-202, and P.J. Honey, ed., North Vietnam Today.)

The only Vietnamese who did go from north to south between 1954 and 1960 were several thousand native southerners. They had regrouped in the north under the terms of the Geneva settlement, expecting to return to their families and villages after the '56 elections. When elections were not held, and knowing that their comrades were being hunted in the south, they returned to take part in the struggle.

By the end of 1960 the insurrection had spread through large parts of south Vietnam. In November, an unsuccessful coup d'etat against Ngo Dinh Diem was attempted by a section of his army.

A little over one month later, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam was formed.

STAGE TWO: THE U.S. TRIES "SPECIAL WAR"  
AGAINST 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, Jan. 27, 1964, quoted in I.F. Stone's Weekly, March 16, 1964.)

In Vietnam, only the Communists represent revolution and social change . . . the Communists . . . remain the only Vietnamese 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)

Every comrade must be helped to understand that as long as we rely on the people, believe firmly in the inexhaustible creative power of the masses and hence trust and identify ourselves with them, we can surmount any difficulty, and no enemy can crush us while we can crush any enemy. (Mao Tse-tung, "On Coalition Government," Selected Works, Vol. III, p. 316, Peking)

The richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people. It is mainly because of the unorganized state of the Chinese masses that Japan dares to bully us. When this defect is remedied, then the Japanese aggressor, like a mad bull crashing into a ring of flames, will be surrounded by hundreds of millions of our people standing upright, the mere sound of their voices will strike terror into him, and he will be burned to death. (Mao Tse-tung, "On Protracted War," Selected Works, Vol. II, p. 186, Peking.)

The creation of the NLF in late 1960 marked a turning point in the war. From relatively unorganized, sporadic clashes the south Vietnamese insurrection reached the level of what Marxist-Leninists call People's War; relying on the bulk of the people, peasants, workers, and members of the lower middle class, the Vietnamese revolutionaries, led by Communists, developed intense armed opposition to the U.S. government and its outright tool, the Saigon regime.

In this the revolutionaries had a clear advantage. Because they stood for the interests of the Vietnamese working people, they could act in accord with them. The U.S. and Diem, however, needed to suppress the power

of the people. So while the National Liberation Front could swim with the current, the U.S. has had to fight upstream all the way. Only the immense support which the Vietnamese give the revolutionaries can possibly explain their ability to keep fighting against - in fact, to defeat - the tremendous military force of the U.S.

We will take up the question of "Special War" later on. But first let's consider the National Liberation Front.

### THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT

According to Douglas Pike, the ex-U.S. security specialist in Saigon:

Members of the original NLF, and its most ardent supporters in the early years, were drawn from the ranks of the Viet Minh Communists; the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects; a scattering of minority group members...idealistic youth, recruited from the universities and polytechnic schools; representatives of farmers' organizations from parts of the Mekong delta, where serious land tenure problems existed; leaders of small political parties or groups or professionals associated with them; intellectuals who had broken with the GVN [the Diem Government] (particularly members of a network of Peace Committees that had sprung up in 1954 in both the North and the South;) military deserters; refugees of various sorts from the Diem government, such as those singled out...in the Denunciation of Communism campaign but who fled before arrest. (Douglas Pike, Viet Cong, p. 83)

The goal of this broad southern coalition, Pike continues, was:

to engage as many Vietnamese as possible--but in any case the vast majority--in a revolt against the state. This was to be accomplished by organizing the population, or to be more precise the rural 85 percent of the population, into manageable units to conduct the revolt. The rural Vietnamese was not regarded simply as a pawn in a power struggle but as the active element in the thrust. He was the thrust. (Pike, ibid., p. 84)

The NLF rapidly became a mass organization that "reached to some degree into virtually every village in the country. (Pike, ibid., p. 111) During the several years following the formation of the NLF:

military activity, even guerrilla military activity, formed a relatively small percentage of the day-to-day work of the members of the NLF...a Main Force unit in the 1962-1963 period spent an average of one day a month on military missions. Much of the rest of the 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 the production of food. (Pike, ibid., p. 238)

The reason for this, Pike makes clear, is that the NLF's objective 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 themselves. (Pike, p. 111,238)

"The village base for the entire insurgency," Pike says, was the group of liberation associations built up in every village.

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. Thus the individual villager saw in the liberation association...an opportunity for benefits that had not previously existed and so he voluntarily supported it. (Pike, p. 166)

The mass democratic character of these liberation associations bewilders Pike. At one point he relates the following piece of information:

"During Operation Sunrise, the start of the strategic-hamlet building program, villagers who had lived under a system of liberation associations revealed that they believed they had taken part in free elections; whether in actuality they had could not be determined. (Pike, p. 228.)



which became to him a real and valuable thing protecting him and his village." (Pike, p. 155)

In sum, Pike stresses:

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)

The use of violence or "terror" by the NLF was highly selective. According to Pike, it was:

chiefly directed at total elimination of the GVN [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)

This stands in fundamental contrast to the strategy and attitude of the U.S. and Diem. Because the latter (correctly) regarded the Vietnamese population as hostile they had to use widespread terror to obtain their objectives. The NLF saw the population as the main force to carry on the revolutionary struggle, the force it existed to serve. The NLF had a concrete program which the people could and did support voluntarily. The U.S. and Diem had a counter-revolutionary program of bringing back the landlords and instituting full-scale repression. Pike notes that:

almost all Vietnamese...were of the firm opinion that as the result of Viet Minh 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)

A RAND Corporation researcher, George K. Tanham, who traveled in south Vietnam during 1960 in an effort to evaluate the insurgency that was developing there, reported in 1961 in his book, Communist Revolutionary Warfare, that:

the crucial fact today is that the Communists are arousing the people to fight and work for them. It is easy but wrong to attribute their success solely to terrorist methods. They are systematically creating the 'sea' that Mao thought essential for military success and eventual political control.

Tanham added:

To judge by equipment and arms that have been captured from the Communists, they have been fighting largely with home-made weapons and with such material of French and American make as they have been able to steal or capture. (Scheer, pp. 57-58)

"SPECIAL WAR": IMPERIALISM DIGS ITS VIETNAM GRAVE FIVE YEARS DEEPER

Shortly after his inauguration, Pres. Kennedy set up a task force to thoroughly review the deteriorating U.S. position in South Vietnam. This group fully understood that Diem was already heading for total collapse, that only a qualitative escalation in the U.S. war could head off a quick NLF victory. Vice-President Johnson was sent to Saigon in May, 1961. (There he announced that Diem was the "Churchill of Asia.") Upon Johnson's return, speaking for the government, he called for an increase in the size of the South Vietnamese (read: anti-South Vietnamese) army, the ARVN, and for stepped-up economic "aid."

Missions by economist Eugene Staley and General Maxwell Taylor followed, resulting in the formulation and adoption of the Staley-Taylor plan. This was the basic plan of "special warfare." Its main points were:

(1) To create a no-man's land along the 17th parallel, and along the frontiers with Laos and Cambodia, by destroying all villages there and using air-sprayed chemicals to destroy the jungle, and thus isolate the liberated areas from the outside world.

(2) To set up 16,000 "strategic hamlets" into which two-thirds of the whole population of the South would be concentrated. By doing that, they calculated to isolate all the resistance forces from the population.

(3) Once the above two measures were completed there would be a general military offensive to wipe out all organized resistance forces. [In general, there would be a tremendous increase in the size of all "South Vietnamese" armed forces, to be used against the NLF; Diem's army was to be reorganized and placed under direct U.S. control; small units of the U.S. army were to be transferred to Vietnam; the numbers of U.S. advisers and the quantity and quality of arms shipments to Diem were to be stepped up. (See Burchett, The Furtive War, pp. 67-68.)]

The first part of the plan was to have been completed by the end of 1962, but things worked out somewhat differently, despite the setting up of a U.S. military command in Saigon under General Paul Harkins and the gradual build-up of some 25,000 U.S. military "advisers" and "instructors" in South Vietnam. (Burchett, Vietnam, Inside Story of a Guerrilla War, p. 189.)

The Staley-Taylor plan was adopted in 1961. To pay for this "special warfare", Pres. Kennedy stepped up the quantity of economic "aid" to Diem "from the original \$125,000,000 for 1961 to \$216,000,000, and for 1962 to \$400,000,000 (Burchett, Furtive War, p. 67.)

Thus "Special War" had two characteristics. First, it was an all-out attempt to separate the people from the NLF by herding them into "Strategic Hamlets", where they would be "safe." The aim was to dry up the sea that sustained the revolutionaries - more, to demoralize and disorganize the Vietnamese people, who were themselves the key

revolutionary force. In these hamlets, the U.S. government hoped, the people would be under the firm control of Diem. The second key aspect of the plan was to use Vietnamese soldiers to put down the revolution. Recognizing that the ARVN's were none too reliable - after all, most of them were peasants too - the plan provided for greater U.S. control of actual operations. The "advisers" were in fact supposed to officer a "native" army to crush a "native" revolution.

In conjunction with this new phase of the war, the U.S. government issued a special White Paper on Vietnam. While calling the war "NORTH VIETNAM'S EFFORT TO CONQUER SOUTH VIETNAM," the White Paper conceded that the bulk of the Vietcong were in fact southern peasants in their villages. It also admitted that "the weapons of the Viet Cong are largely French, or U.S. made, or handmade on primitive forges in the jungles," (Scheer, pp. 65-66.)

What was the fate of "Special War"?

The "strategic hamlet" program met with near-universal and very fierce resistance from the Vietnamese peasants. This should not be surprising. Under this program the ARVN was ordered to destroy the peasant's home, his livelihood (e.g. his rice was burnt, so he couldn't feed the "Vietcong") and he was herded into a concentration camp, surrounded by barbed wire and stakes (many pointing in: geared to prevent escape), etc., etc. Even Time magazine had to admit:

. . . the peasants strongly resisted the . . . strategic hamlets into which they were herded by force. (Quoted in Felix Greene, Vietnam! Vietnam!, p. 138.)

Douglas Pike put it this way:

. . . the rural Vietnamese . . . was expected to contribute much . . . he was deprived of his freedom of movement . . . he was burdened with extra work; the wealthier could buy their way out. He was in many cases deprived of his land without adequate compensation, and the quarters given him in the strategic hamlet were not as adequate as those he had left. Living in the strategic hamlet put him more at the mercy of possibly corrupt officials . . . . The entire program took on a military cast. (Pike, p. 68.)

And the New York Times said:

. . . 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-1962. "Apparent" is the right word, however. For this program only succeeded in further alienating the Vietnamese from Diem, in further demonstrating that he was a complete tool of the U.S., in more thoroughly turning the people against the U.S. During this "respite" the NLF dug in even deeper among the peasants, organized very effective opposition to the "strategic hamlet" program. And in early 1963, the revolutionaries routed the Diem-U.S. forces throughout the Mekong Delta. In mid-1963, New York Times correspondent David Halberstram wrote that "it was clear that the Government had lost the initiative." (David Halberstram, The Making of a Quagmire, pp. 189-190.)

The relation of forces militarily in Vietnam is well indicated by weapon losses. Semi-official figures indicated that government weapon losses had increased considerably, while National Liberation Front losses had dropped. (Kahin, p. 142.)

The crisis in the U.S. war that had come to a head in 1960-1961 was not solved by special war, but only postponed. It reappeared, more profoundly, in 1963.

The buddhist uprisings against Diem in May, 1963, were not the reason the U.S. finally decided to dump Diem. Given the history of the U.S. war, official claims that the U.S. government had just discovered that Diem was a tyrant are ridiculous. The basic reason Diem was dumped was that the U.S. had become desperate, was thrashing about for a way out short of sending massive numbers of American troops. Diem's "newly discovered" atrocities were, of course, used as an excuse; but the real hope was that, by replacing him with another puppet ruler, the war would go better. By early fall, 1963, the U.S. began to hint to top south Vietnamese army officers that it would welcome Diem's overthrow. Then aid to Diem's elite palace forces was cut off. On Nov. 1 Diem was ousted and murdered in the first of many coups.

During 1964, the NLF pressed its offensive. It liberated vast areas of south Vietnam, expanded its troop strength and virtually annihilated the strategic reserves of the Saigon regime. On March 26, 1964, Secretary of Defense McNamara was forced to admit that the "Vietcong" had "large indigenous support." (Quoted in Draper, p. 14.) And an official U.S. report released on April 1, 1964, stated that 42% of Vietnam's villages were under NLF control, with most of the rest being "contested."

In 1964 the rate of desertion from Diem's army had become disastrous. "Special War" had failed.

### STAGE THREE: THE U.S. INVADES

During 1964, signs appeared that the war would soon enter a new phase involving major attacks on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam - the D.R.V.) and large numbers of U.S. troops in the south.

Raids against the D.R.V. didn't begin with the Aug., 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incidents, however. Smaller attacks had occurred since the 1950's. Thus the April 6, 1964 issue of Aviation Week carried the following story:

Saigon - 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 . . . With U.S. backing in aircraft, weapons and money, an estimated 50,000 elite South Vietnamese troops are being trained to take the offensive in over-the-border strikes at Communist supply centers and communications routes. Despite Defense Secretary McNamara's implication in Washington March 25 that the decision has not yet been made to extend the war, it is known here that guerrilla strikes against the Communists have been increasing since last summer . . . . Last fall /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. (Our emphasis. Note that the decision to expand the war outside southern Vietnam was made under Kennedy, not later during the presidency of the "insane" Johnson.)

And on July 23, 1964, just a few days before Tonkin, the Saigon Post reported:

Air Commander Nguyen Cao Ky told newsmen at the Bien Hoa air base that there has been an overall 40 percent increase in air operations aimed at sending Special Forces teams into North Vietnam. The official admission came as unconfirmed reports by Vietnamese sources told of widespread explosions rocking industrial centers and harbor areas in North Vietnam since July 10.

Georges Chaffard, well-known French correspondent for Le Monde, wrote on August 9, 1964, that intelligence, counter-espionage and sabotage missions against the D.R.V. had been going on since at least 1957. He added that they picked up in '61, when Kennedy sought to "disorganize the economic and military potential of the North." (Le Monde, Aug. 9, 1964.)

Evidence revealed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee concerning Tonkin further proves this point. At the time of the supposed DRV PT boat attacks on American destroyers (!) in Tonkin, those destroyers were in fact providing escort for Saigon raids along the DRV's coast. (Sen. Morse, quoted in I.F. Stone's Weekly, March 4, 1968.)

It's also been established that LBJ carried the Tonkin resolution in his pocket for weeks, awaiting the right moment. (Tom Wicker, New York Times writer, in Esquire, Nov. 1965.) And as we observed earlier (see Aviation Week quote above) the decision to attack the north full force had been made long before fall, 1964 - at least a year before.

During the Nov., 1964, presidential campaign, Johnson hid from the American people the decision which the ruling class had already made, to escalate. Thus many were fooled into viewing Johnson as the peace-loving alternative to Goldwater, with his (more honest) program (or was it just a plain prediction?) of U.S. escalation.



The events of 1964 were barely a prelude to the full-scale escalation that began in Feb., 1965. On Feb. 7, using a successful NLF attack on American facilities at Pleiku as the pretext, the U.S. began regular bombings of the D.R.V. Simultaneously, the huge buildup of U.S. troops in the South began. To justify these steps, the U.S. government issued yet another White Paper, complete with "evidence" of expanded North Vietnamese aggression.

But the White Paper's evidence, as analyzed, for example, by I.F. Stone (see I.F. Stone's Weekly, 3/8/65) showed that approximately 2.5% of NLF weapons came from Communist countries, and that at least six North Vietnamese infiltrators had been identified in the South! This is an invasion?

Unable to prove its case with statistics, the White Paper resorted to standard imperialist reasoning: the people in the south were very happy, peaceful folk, prosperous in a democratic land; they had no reason at all to rebel; therefore the war was the work of outsiders; the "Vietcong" had to be a northern Fifth Column since they lacked all indigenous support.

The logic was consistent. The facts were outright lies. For, as we have seen, the south had been in full-scale revolt for several years. The NLF was, in fact, a mass-based movement, based entirely on the support and extensive participation of the people of the south. Following a trip to the south, and after checking with the Pentagon, Sen. Mike Mansfield stated that there were no more than 400 (!) DRV troops in the south in early 1965, when the bombing began. (Theodore Draper, Abuse of Power, pp. 78-79.)

### WHY ESCALATION?

Although the U.S. government claimed that this tremendous escalation was intended to meet escalated aggression from the DRV, we have seen that American leaders realized that the NLF was supported by the southern people. The bombings could hardly have been intended to reduce the nearly non-existent flow of weapons and men from the North. In fact, they caused the DRV for the first time to send large-scale aid to the NLF.

Either the U.S. government was insane or there were some other reasons for escalation.

In fact, the real reasons were:

1) To bolster morale in Saigon and prevent an NLF victory. The attempt at "special war" had failed. The desertion rate, which we'll cite later, was immense. The NLF controlled most of the countryside. Washington hoped that by sending in massive numbers of U.S. troops, the NLF could be defeated.

2) To get the DRV to pressure the NLF to come to the "negotiating table" with them through the pressure of intensive bombing.

The first aim has clearly failed. We shall discuss the second aim, that of forcing talks through terror, later in this article.

## THE MILITARY SITUATION TO THE PRESENT

Since 1965, as always, the U.S. has claimed it is winning the war. Dovish critics, on the other hand, maintain that the war is stalemated. Contrary to both, evidence shows the NLF is continuing to win the war, as it was prior to 1965.

Since the beginning of the U.S. buildup in 1965, there have been three dry season periods. During these times, weather is favorable to U.S. air support for ground actions. During the first and second periods, the U.S. launched large-scale "search and destroy" operations, with names like "Operation Attleboro" and "Operation Junction City." These aimed at finding and destroying large "Vietcong" troop concentrations. They failed. U.S. forces suffered heavy casualties. In the last dry season, there were no large-scale U.S. operations. Instead, the NLF launched its TET offensive, which decisively smashed the government's tales about how "well" the war is going. The strategic initiative is therefore now in the hands of the NLF.

Moreover, during the past three years NLF influence has been extended throughout South Vietnam. The U.S. attempt to defeat NLF influence by "pacifying" villages has been a total failure.

Thus U.S. News and World Report, July 31, 1967, 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 . . . .

Desertions, according to the New York Times, occur 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, Sep. 18, 1967.) Recent news articles suggest that the rate was at least as high for 1967. Moreover, during the 1968 Tet offensive, additional tens of thousands of South Vietnamese soldiers deserted en masse to the NLF.

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 has 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 regain control the first thing "pacification" teams do is try to restore the landownership 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. (1/8/68.)

Since these various reports were made, the NLF has carried out the historic Tet offensive. The NLF's attacks required the careful cooperation and participation of tens of thousands of city dwellers.

At the same time, in the countryside, the NLF overran literally hundreds of Government outposts, drove out "pacification" teams, and liberated new areas. The American Government has been forced to admit that the Tet offensive set the pacification effort back at least eighteen months. In addition the NLF apparently knocked out hundreds of American planes and helicopters and destroyed or captured hundreds of tons of American supplies.

To sum up, the picture is not one of military stalemate. The NLF is winning victory after victory, holding the initiative on every level, consolidating its support among the vast majority of the population, and inflicting severe defeats on the U.S. forces. The ARVN has essentially ceased to exist as a fighting force, and the Americans are over-extended and tied down defending their camps and bases, which are



Riot police break up anti-government  
anti-U.S. demonstration

constantly under attack. The present encirclement of American marines at Khe Sanh illustrates the situation American forces are in throughout south Vietnam.

### WHY IS THE U.S. IN VIETNAM?

There are three main answers to this question.

Some would argue that the U.S. is fighting to defend the Vietnamese people's freedom. The history of the war defeats that argument.

The other two explanations, both held by opponents of the war, are very different.

We would hold that crushing the Vietnamese is part of a world-wide strategy of U.S. Imperialism, a strategy necessary for the survival of that system. Others maintain that the war is, in some sense, an accident - the result of stupidity, or miscalculations on the part of U.S. policy makers.

This difference is crucial. These two views of the war dictate opposite ways of fighting against it.

Let's briefly examine Vietnam in the context of U.S. foreign policy in general.

Has it been a consistent U.S. strategy to oppose revolutionary movements in support of U.S. economic interests?

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

Pres. Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles - Dulles was both a stockholder in and long-time corporation counsel for United Fruit - directed the Central Intelligence Agency to initiate plans for the overthrow of the popularly elected 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 right-wing military 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 CIA's role. See David Horowitz, The Free World Colossus, pp. 163-186, and John Gerassi, The Great Fear in Latin America, for a more detailed account.)

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

Or consider Lebanon. July 15, 1958. 10,000 U.S. marines were landed, with two goals. What were these goals? First, to roll back the rebellion against the fraudulently elected, 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 three years ago? Did the government really believe that the famous "53 reds" were threatening the security of Manhattan? Or did Washington fear that <sup>the</sup> 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 alone might be an accident. But 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 the combined capitalists and manufacturers of the United states. (Woodrow Wilson, 1913, quoted in Leo Huberman and Sybil H. May, The ABC of Socialism, p. 19.)

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 man 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. (in Great Fear, pp. 231,239; Common Sense, 1935.)

Perhaps these quotes are outdated. Many people feel 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.

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 (which, politically, dictate counter-revolution) 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 (for more on this, see Appendix 1 to this article, on the economics of Imperialism in Vietnam.) Second, the fact that U.S. foreign policy has consistently been to crush revolutions whenever these appeared to threaten the interest 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, Mar. 17, 1966.)

Since World War Two 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 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 an anti-Johnson man. 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." (Monthly Review, Nov. 1966, p. 13.) Wages (which stand in inverse proportion to rate of profits) in Asia are the world's lowest. (See Appendix 1).

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. . . . I believe that the condition of the Vietnamese people, and the direction in which their future may be going, are at this stage secondary, not primary. (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, where people's war is developing despite the recent mass slaughter of Communists and their peasant and working class supporters. In India, a peasant revolution has begun and is spreading. In Laos, Thailand and South Vietnam, national liberation movements are fighting against huge U.S. forces - A.R.V.N.-type armies led by U.S. "advisers" or huge numbers of

regular U.S. troops. (See issues of World Revolution, a Progressive Labor Party digest compiled from the revolutionary press around the world, for more information about these and other revolutionary wars.)

Of all these movements, the south Vietnam National Liberation Front is by far the strongest, the most developed. The U.S. desperately needs to crush the NLF as an example and to create a safe rear for operations against other Asian revolutions.

Third - Asia includes China, a land the U.S. wants very much to exploit economically and which, as the ideological center of world revolution, is a tremendous threat to U.S. control of not only Asia, but of the entire world. The U.S. press may sneer at the cultural revolution and the power of the thought of Mao Tse-tung. But, in fact, the bold, sharp call to revolution which the Chinese are putting forth has immense meaning to millions of people - from Guatemalan agricultural laborers to South Korean factory hands - to all people hurt by imperialism - and the imperialists know that. Moreover, the U.S. kept the door to China open for future use for fifty years. But when, in 1949, they were just getting ready to take advantage of that vast wealth, the door was slammed shut in their faces.

The Vietnam war is a stepping stone toward (the U.S. ruling class hopes) the reconquest, by peaceful means if possible, by war if necessary, of that immense enemy and potential treasure house of imperialism.

The U.S. has, from its imperialist viewpoint, excellent reasons for being in Vietnam. For the anti-war movement to act on the illusion that the war is a tragic blunder, or an act of stupidity or malice would be to render the movement powerless to help get the U.S. out. You can't lift a boulder if you're expecting a pebble.

### NEGOTIATE? OR GET OUT OF VIETNAM NOW!

But even given that the Vietnam war is imperialist, that the U.S. is totally wrong, that one would wish for a U.S. defeat in Vietnam - assuming all this is true, still, why not work for negotiations? Why not back a reasonable man like Kennedy? Or if he's too opportunistic, Eugene McCarthy? At least they'd end the slaughter. After all, you don't have to be pro-imperialist to want peace in Vietnam.

We realize that many people feel this way. We don't question the honesty of that feeling, nor do we doubt that often this position represents a real change in people's views - from seeing the war as a necessary evil, to viewing it as wrong, as something that must be opposed.

We feel, however, that this stand is a mistake, based on a serious misestimate of the actual situation.

Why do we oppose McCarthy, Kennedy, and their calls for negotiations in Vietnam?

## THE U.S. IN VIETNAM: IMPERIALISM'S SELF-CREATED BIND

It is very important, in discussing negotiations to keep in mind the general position of the US in Vietnam. It is a very difficult position.

On the one hand, as we have seen, Vietnam is not a miscalculation. Of course the Imperialists would prefer not to keep fighting - that is, they would prefer to have won in the 50's. However, the issue is not one of personal desire, but cold necessity. The U.S. needs Vietnam.

On the other hand, things are going badly. The harder the Imperialists fight - or, rather, the more of us they send to die for them - the worse things seem to get. This is not so strange, actually. It follows a basic law. The U.S. government is kicking the Vietnamese; they do not like to be kicked; the more the U.S. kicks, the madder the Vietnamese become. The law operating was discovered by Bertholt Brecht, the German Communist playwright: "He who gets kicked kicks back."

Therefore, the more troops the U.S. sends, the more enemies it makes in Vietnam and everywhere else, and the more troops it has to send to crush that opposition. Already Washington is saying they need half a million more troops. If they send a million, it will create the need for a million more. And so on.

Of course, the U.S. has tremendous reserves of men and machinery for war use, but the circle is vicious, and U.S. resources are finite. And while the U.S. fights in Vietnam, things get worse elsewhere in Asia, Latin America, Africa - and in the U.S.

What can the government do?

U.S. imperialists have no desire to fight in Vietnam. They would surely prefer to win peacefully. Therefore, they have no objection to a deal - a settlement which would end the Vietnamese revolution so they could economically exploit the Vietnamese and, more important, use that country as a stable rear area for operations against the rest of Asia. In fact, the U.S. originally began bombing the North to get the DRV to pressure the NLF into making such a deal.

All the U.S. wants is a "peace" of somebody else's country. What would such a "peace" mean for Vietnam?

### NEGOTIATIONS - FOR A PEACE THAT KILLS

But aren't we being unfair? We speak of "U.S. Imperialism" as if it were a monolith. Whether or not you want to call the doves "Imperialists" - aren't they for disengagement from Vietnam? If they were in power and able to negotiate, wouldn't they be willing to withdraw?

There are certainly differences among the imperialists. The content of those differences will be discussed in more detail later on. But one thing that the "doves" and "hawks" agree on: the U.S. can't just withdraw. Let's look at the two main "doves" statements.

In his important March 2, 1967, Senate speech, Bobby Kennedy said:

"Nearly all Americans share with us the determination to remain in Vietnam until we have fulfilled our commitments...There is no danger of any division...which will erode American will and compel American withdrawal."  
(NY Times, March 3, 1967) (Our italics)

But the U.S. setup the Diem regime. The commitment about which Kennedy speaks is one which the American government made to itself. It was a promise, a commitment to dominate Vietnam, and Kennedy promises to military "remain in Vietnam until we have fulfilled our commitments."

Despite personal differences, McCarthy's political stand is pretty much identical:

I am not for peace at any price but for an honorable, rational and just political solution to this war."  
(Quoted in McCarthy for President campaign literature.)

The "price" McCarthy must be referring to is the expulsion of the U.S. from Vietnam. That is, he, like Kennedy, opposes immediate withdrawal, opposes letting the south Vietnamese determine their own affairs. If there is any doubt on this, consider this Boston Herald Traveller report of a McCarthy speech:

"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 expect there would be formal arrangements to say who would be there and in how many numbers,' he said in response to a Fond Du Lac questioner." (Traveller, 3/26/68.)

And in an interview in America, a Jesuit publication:

"'I think,' he said, 'a phased withdrawal with some stops along the way would lead to a reasonable settlement.' But, he said, it would be 'precipitous' to remove U.S. forces within six months of negotiations as promised by President Johnson. 'I think I would advise him against moving that fast,' McCarthy said. 'I would put the time limit at five years.'" (America, Dec. 16, 1967. Our emphasis.)

Aside from the interesting point that the America quote casts Johnson, not McCarthy, as "dove", the position of the two "peace" candidates is quite clear. There is no criticism of U.S. goals in Vietnam. They aren't interested in getting the U.S. out of Vietnam. Rather, they wish to achieve, through negotiations, a less costly way for getting U.S. control in the area. During the "five years", or "long, long time" that U.S. troops are to remain, perhaps in enclaves, the government could use political maneuvering, bribery, threats, and perhaps CIA-type selective terrorism as well, to break down the unity of the national liberation forces. This would achieve, through flexible tactics what the "doves" feel is impossible with just the

blunt club of escalation:

"McCarthy said he saw no chance of a victory 'by further escalation...'" (America, op. cit.)

More on this later. Now let's return to the question: what would negotiations, leading to U.S. control in a somewhat more flexible form, mean for the Vietnamese?

Would peaceful U.S. domination be better than war?

War means suffering. But "peace", with U.S. domination means imperialist rule. And imperialism means immense suffering, incalculable suffering that does not end fairly soon the way the violence of a revolution ends, but which drags on and on, for decades - until the people finally throw Imperialism out by force.

Imperialist rule in Vietnam would mean the return to power in the countryside of the landlords, backed up by the tremendous military strength of the U.S. It would mean vicious political suppression, and the further devastation of the economy by the imperialists (see Appendix I). It would mean the complete subjugation of Vietnam as a U.S. colony and strategic military base.

If anyone thinks such "peace" is preferable to fighting against Imperialism, he should consider more seriously the situation of a poor peasant or worker in a colonial country. We are not indifferent to the suffering of the Vietnamese. Precisely because we sympathize, because we side with them, we want them to throw off the source of their misery, to take power in their country. It is a false sympathy which betrays the object of feeling to the unending misery of imperialist domination.

But aren't compromises sometimes desirable? Yes - sometimes. As Lenin noted in Left Wing Communism, for one to give a robber his valuables at gunpoint so he can depart alive is understandable. But to hand over both your gun and your wallet to a thief who will, from his strengthened position, enslave you, would be a big mistake.

A pacifist position, which sees war as the greatest evil is mistaken. The U.S. government serves the ruling class of men, 0.5% of the U.S. population, who own most basic industry in this country and much of the rest of the world. In serving the bourgeoisie it has no qualms about cracking heads or shooting mace or machine guns or dropping napalm on those who oppose - sometimes only slightly oppose - bourgeois rule. Besides that, there is the day to day prosaic exploitation of millions upon millions. There is the vicious speed-up of machinery in U.S.-owned plants at home and abroad, the non-education enforced on working class children in America, especially black ones, the vast slums that result from U.S. imperialism's rule all over the world. This is also violence. Latin American children with rickets have been wounded in combat.

Capitalism is in fact constant war by the ruling class against working people. To urge the oppressed not to answer this counter-revolutionary war with revolutionary war is to say, in effect, that the poor should stay in their place, stay oppressed. This sort of

"peace" is just war with the oppressors on top.

Moreover, were the Vietnamese to "come to terms" (i.e., end their entirely justified revolution) the U.S. military position would be boosted throughout Asia. Their troops freed from combat in Vietnam, and using that country as a stable rear, the Imperialists could mass huge forces to crush the Thai, Laotian, Burmese and other revolutionary people. Negotiations in Vietnam would not end the slaughter, even in the limited sense of a superficial lull in the fighting. Negotiations would aid, not prevent, the Imperialist conquest of Asia.

McCarthy and Kennedy often hint at this aim of further conquest, although they are never fully explicit about it. Thus McCarthy speaks of an "acceptable" settlement as permitting "us to give the necessary attention to our other commitments abroad - both military and non-military." (Mass. McCarthy for President Committee, campaign literature.) As we have seen, U.S. commitments in the under-developed world are geared to overthrowing regimes which are groping for even the most moderate reforms when such reforms threaten U.S. business interests. Two such cases, already discussed briefly, are Arbenz in Guatemala and Mossadegh in Iran. These commitments mean propping up pro-Imperialist regimes, like those in Haiti (Great Fear p. 234), or Spain, or South Africa, to name just three out of many. These regimes serve to hold their populations down so imperialism can exploit them. They are detested by the people.

There are not two kinds of commitments the U.S. has in the world: rather, U.S. foreign policy is geared to opposing revolution and aiding the expansion of U.S. business. McCarthy's apparently innocent "dove" remark is in fact a strategy of being more flexible in Vietnam so that imperialism can have greater room to maneuver elsewhere, where things are also getting rough. That this is in fact the real content of McCarthy's "peace" aims is shown by his statement, repeated throughout the New Hampshire campaign, that he wants the U.S. to return to the policies of Truman, Eisenhower, and JFK! Truman backed the French in Vietnam, Eisenhower put in Diem, and JFK planned the expansion of the war to the north! Is this a stand which anyone opposed to the war can support?

The picture becomes confusing. If what's been said is true, then what are the differences between Kennedy and McCarthy on the one hand and Johnson on the other? Is the dispute a fraud? Before we consider that question, we must return for a moment to consider the attitude of the Vietnamese.

### THE VIETNAMESE RETREAT

To recapitulate briefly: it is our contention that all imperialists would like to see a deal in Vietnam, whereby U.S. control would be maintained at minimum cost to imperialism.

We would also maintain that there is no good reason for the Vietnamese to accept such a deal. What point is there in going through the ferocious struggle of revolution in order to give in and negotiate a share of your country with the oppressors? There's no point throwing somebody out the front door if you're going to let him

in the back.

But perhaps the Vietnamese have no choice? Perhaps they are in fact losing the war, being beaten so badly that some kind of compromise would give them a breathing spell so they could fight again later. The whole history of the war, and especially of the recent Tet offensive, shows, in fact, that they are winning.

And until 1967, both the NLF and the DRV opposed any negotiations before U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh put it this way, responding to U.S. calls for "peace talks" in 1965:

"Let the American imperialists cease aggression, terminate all military operations against North Vietnam and withdraw the United States troops from South Vietnam, then peace will be established at once in Vietnam." (NY Times, Jan. 1, 1967)

But recent North Vietnamese statements, beginning with Nguyen Duy Trinh's interview in late Jan., 1967, represent a clear retreat from this stand. For instance, answering a "peace" letter from LBJ last year, Ho Chi Minh stated that:

"...after the unconditional cessation of U.S. bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the DRV and the United States could enter into talks and discuss questions concerning both sides." (US News and World Report, April 3, 1967)

The DRV's original four points have thus been dropped as the condition for talks. This has in fact weakened anti-imperialist forces around the world, just as the Vietnamese' earlier demand for unconditional withdrawal strengthened those forces. After all, what questions are there to discuss "concerning both sides"? This stand can only help move people who support the NLF and North Vietnam into a "stop the bombing and negotiate" position, a position of support for Kennedy or McCarthy.

North Vietnam asserted today that the U.S. government was in an 'awkward and embarrassing' position following the RFK speech quoted above. . . . Senator Kennedy, Nhan Dan declared, 'denounced' (!) Johnson for steadily widening the war and urged the U.S. halt bombing in North Vietnam unconditionally in order to bring peace nearer. (New York Times, March 5, 1967.)

This implies a complete misestimate of the "doves." The disagreement between LBJ and McCarthy and Kennedy is in fact quite small. It is basically a matter of timing. To clear up this point, and to understand better why the DRV has backslid, we should consider the Soviet role in the U.S. intrigue for a deal.

#### A PHONY COMMUNIST IS AN IMPERIALIST'S BEST FRIEND

Latest intelligence estimates are that Russia is now sending more than 75% of the outside military aid going to Ho Chi Minh's Hanoi regime. Moscow has supplanted

Peking as the main source of war material for the Vietnamese Red forces. (U.S. News and World Report, April 3, 1967.)

A curious situation indeed. The Russians supply most of the weapons to the DRV - let us assume the quote is inaccurate, and simply say much of the arms - and the U.S. makes no objection at all! But it's actually not strange at all. The U.S. knows the Russians must give military aid to maintain their influence in Hanoi. And Russian pressure has certainly been a large factor, if not the main factor, in getting Hanoi to reverse its stand on talks.

Theodore Draper put it this way:

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.)

And in a recent interview on Face the Nation British Prime Minister Harold Wilson (who has been active in trying to set up U.S.-DRV negotiations for several years) was asked to explain why the Soviet Union kept sending more and more aid to Hanoi if it were really interested in "peace" in Vietnam. Wilson responded that the reporters didn't appreciate the complex situation in Hanoi. Soviet aid, he explained, was the basis of Soviet influence there, and the only way the Russians might be able to pressure the North Vietnamese to accept negotiations.

The Russians are trying their best. But still there are questions:

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? (New York Times, Feb. 11, 1967.)

It is precisely in their approach to these questions that the "doves" and "hawks" differ. Let us first consider the "doves." Here is Kennedy again:

Let us stop bombing and test the sincerity of the statements by Premier Kosygin and others asserting that if the bombardment of the North is halted, negotiations would begin. (New York Times, March 3, 1967.)

The Russians can get us a good deal, argues the liberal young imperialist. Give them the chance, stop bombing and give them room to operate. Negotiations will strengthen the legality of our position and break the morale of the Vietnamese revolutionaries. We'll maintain our domination! And Arthur Schlesinger echoes him:

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

Why, then, do LBJ and company reject this advice? Because, as Dean Rusk said in answer to Kennedy, as quoted above:

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

Please, the Russians beg, negotiate now. Otherwise Chinese influence may grow. (Manchester Guardian, Feb. 13, 1967.) But as LBJ sees it, the Russians are being quite modest. They can do far better than they have done, is the idea. He wants them to wrangle a guarantee before he negotiates. The Russians are doing their best.

#### SUMMING UP A COMPLEX SITUATION

The situation as regards Vietnam today is therefore not a simple one. On the U.S. side, with the war going terribly, and

growing evidence of a deepening moral crisis in America: discontent, frustration, and a disposition to extra-legal - if not illegal - manifestations of protest, (McCarthy, quoted in campaign literature.)

a tactical division has arisen among the ruling circles. The same thing occurred in 1954. The question then was how to react to the French defeat, and the "doves" (e.g. JFK) and "hawks" (e.g. Nixon) were divided on how best to establish U.S. control in Vietnam. At that time the "doves" won. The "doves" made the war in Vietnam, not the "hawks." Today, on the one hand, LBJ and others maintain that the best way to force a deal with Hanoi is by stepping up pressure:

Vice President Humphrey argued . . . that negotiations will become a reality only when the enemy forces "feel that this struggle cannot be won militarily . . . ." (New York Times, Dec. 10, 1967.)

The "doves" argue, on the other hand, that "United States conditions for negotiations were unrealistic." (McCarthy, paraphrased, New York Times, ibid.) They feel the Russians are strong enough to force Hanoi and the NLF to reasonable terms, i.e. allow the U.S. to remain, complete with troops "for 'a long, long time'" (McCarthy, quoted in Boston Herald-Traveler, 3/26/68.) They want Saigon to "broaden its political

base by bringing into the government some of the civilian opposition elements which were denied a role in the government." (McCarthy, quoted in campaign literature.) And of course, as both McCarthy and Kennedy always point out, if the NLF and Hanoi don't accept a "reasonable" settlement, the U.S. can always just resume the escalation.

On the Vietnamese side, the NLF is definitely winning the military struggle. But recently a retreat on basic demands has occurred. This is undoubtedly due in large measure to the pressure and maneuvers of the USSR, which has used its aid to gain very strong influence among the Vietnamese. Why would the Russians do this? In Indonesia, less than a year after a U.S. supported military junta slaughtered over half a million anti-imperialist and Communist workers, peasants and intellectuals:

Indonesian hopes of achieving a balanced budget for the first time in 16 years of inflationary deficits took new life today from an announcement that the Soviet Union had agreed to . . . defer payments of roughly \$20 million on debts due this year and next . . . . This is a necessary prelude to a similar agreement with Western creditors. (New York Times, Nov. 24, 1966.)

Without discussing the matter fully, it should not be surprising that a "communist" country which would act in so comradesly a fashion toward a regime of outright fascists - tries to sell the Vietnamese down the river. Vietnamese backsliding demonstrates the real dangers inherent in accepting "help" from such eager partners with imperialism.

We have already shown:

First, that the U.S. has no more right to negotiate Vietnam's fate with the NLF and/or DRV than a robber in another man's house. Negotiations would be entirely unjust.

Second, that negotiations would not be bad for Imperialism. On the contrary, all imperialists agree that under certain conditions (their differences lie in defining those conditions precisely) negotiations would be quite favorable. By perpetuating U.S. presence in Vietnam, negotiations would allow the U.S. both to exploit that country economically and, at the same time, expand its attacks on the rest of Asia from a more or less stable rear. Thus neither the south Vietnamese, nor other Asian peoples, nor the American people, would gain from negotiations.

Third, that the Vietnamese do not have to negotiate - they're winning the war in the south.

Now let us deal with two remaining points. First, would such a demand be good for the movement? And second, would the anti-war movement gain from backing McCarthy or Kennedy?

#### NEGOTIATIONS AND THE MOVEMENT

Indeed, the demand for negotiations would undoubtedly attract new people into the anti-war movement - but it would be at the expense of that movement's strength and effectiveness. If the only acceptable

solution is for the U.S. to get out of Vietnam immediately, no strings attached, then what sort of movement can be built based on negotiations? That demand clearly implies that there are two sides with rights in the situation, both having in some sense legitimate interests around which they can bargain. If the war - and the many just as intense revolutionary wars that will follow - is the result of the increasing need of Imperialism to expand economically, and therefore to crush all revolutionary, anti-imperialist opposition - then why pretend both parties have right and wrong to their credit? Wouldn't such a movement necessarily cast a haze over the real, predatory, thoroughly rotten character of U.S. imperialism, thus making more difficult the task of fighting it? A movement for negotiations essentially stands neutral on the question of who is right in Vietnam; but to attempt such neutrality, in face of the clearly unjust nature of the U.S. war, to cover up the real relation of forces, is to become a movement of apologists for imperialism. By building such a movement, we would be doing something quite useful for the system, but how would we be serving the people - and they include most Americans - whom Imperialism hurts?

And what if negotiations did occur? That would mean the consolidation of Vietnam as an Imperialist bastion and the even faster expansion of the war throughout all of Asia. Imagine the future of our movement then. Every time the U.S. attacked, bombed, sent in troops and manufactured "Churchills of Asia" so these Churchills could request imperialist support, the peace movement would call for talks. Eventually the leaders of our movement could help run an immense pax Americana created by the U.S. demanding and obtaining control of every other country.

Or, on the other hand, what if the U.S. did agree to negotiations - and the NLF refused? We would have won people over on the phony basis of "both sides should sit down together and talk things over," and when where would we be? The government could go to those people and say, look, we tried. Now you can understand why we have to give these commies hell. And because we never tried to develop understanding of what was really going on, we would have built a base for the government.

A very different sort of movement must be built. It must attempt to unite all those in this country whom Imperialism hurts - which includes workers, black people, students, and much of the middle class. That movement must be based not on the lie of negotiations but on grass roots organizing around the ways Imperialism screws the people, linking these concrete effects with an increasing understanding of the causes of these problems, the system of capitalism. This means very hard, very slow work; it means adopting the attitude of trying to oppose the imperialists and serve the people they hurt. It means, in the specific case of the Vietnam war, dropping the bad demand of Negotiations, and instead, so that we can systematically expose the causes of this war, calling for the only justifiable solution - immediate withdrawal.

### THE "DOVES" ARE BIRDS OF PREY

What then about supporting McCarthy or Kennedy? Without rehashing all the arguments already raised against negotiations - which rest on the analysis and history of the war already presented - let us answer several questions about these candidates:

1) Are they for withdrawal from Vietnam? Obviously not. McCarthy isn't even always for stopping the bombing. Thus McCarthy said:

Maybe you would continue the bombing, especially the supply routes. At the same time, you would vacate - withdraw - from some areas in South Vietnam.' (America, ibid.)

McCarthy said there were areas that were Vietcong strongholds and others that were not particularly useful to the United States . . . 'Let's open up some areas and see what happens and then press for negotiations.' (New York Times, 12,11/67.)

And remember, McCarthy doesn't see American troops leaving Vietnam for five years (as opposed to Johsson's six months) after negotiations begin! (America, ibid.)

2) Are they against Imperialism in any way? No, in fact one of their main arguments for using a broader approach in Vietnam is that "an honorable, rational, and political solution to this war . . . will permit us to give the necessary attention to our other commitments abroad - both military and non-military." (McCarthy, quoted from campaign literature.)

3) Is their "oppositon" to whatever itis they oppose long-standing? No. Bobby was in on the early-1960's planning of "special war". Indeed, he was Attorney General when his brother formulated plans, mentioned earlier, for escalating the war to the DRV.

"He assailed the nation's pride in its Gross National Product because, he said, it includes napalm and nuclear warheads and the armored vehicles police are buying in anticipation of urban riots." (Boston Globe, Mar. 26, 1968.) Why didn't he assail the nation's pride in 1962?

And McCarthy voted for the Tonkin Gulf resolution and all war appropriations. Moreover, their opposition is entirely opportunist.

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i THE LIBERAL IS AN IMPERIALIST p  
t e  
s Consider Kennedy's responses to student questions r  
i this week, at San Fernando Valley State College, a hot- i  
l bed of radical youth. Kennedy opposed a unilateral Viet- a  
a nam pullout, opposed the New Left's neo-isolationism, l  
i would not condemn jailing Vietnam draft dodgers, would i  
r not promise to end the draft, and opposed reopening the s  
e Warren Commission's investigations. For student rad- t  
p icals, Johnson could scarcely have done worse . . . i  
m  
i More important are the differences over Vietnam. p  
t His New-Leftish supporters, disappointed over Kennedy's e  
s failure to outline a clear course of de-escalation his r  
i first two days in California, were appalled when he i  
l sanctioned jailing of draft resisters. (Rowland Evans a  
a and Robert Novak, New York Post, March 28, 1968.) l  
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For example, how can McCarthy say he wants to return to Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy - but he opposes the war? I like the craftsmanship of the village pig-raiser, but I don't like his pigs?

4) Are their records good on other domestic issues? No. Kennedy was the Attorney General who, during the JFK years, pushed for a wiretap bill. He prosecuted the kids who travelled to Cuba, breaking the travel ban. Years ago he was aide to Joseph McCarthy.

McCarthy opposes abolition of the draft. He is notorious for his ties to the unabashedly reactionary drug manufacturing interests. Thus in a syndicated column entitled "MCCARTHY, THE SWITCH LIBERAL," Drew Pearson wrote:

One of the most astonishing closed-door maneuvers during the final weeks of Congress took place inside the Senate Finance Committee and involved Sen. Eugene McCarthy, the hero of the liberals . . . He joined the conservatives in an attempt to bury a drug amendment which would have saved \$100 million a year and affected the price of drugs for millions of older people. The backroom maneuver also illustrated why the drug companies have been able to pocket a 21.1% after-tax profit on their investment . . . McCarthy, running as an all-out liberal, voted with the conservatives to continue enriching the drug companies at the taxpayers' expense . . . the surprising swing vote was cast by McCarthy. (Boston Globe, 12/19/67.)

And nowadays, when even racists are attacking white racism, McCarthy had this to say about the problem:

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. (Quoted in a piece of campaign literature entitled "ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS FOR UCLA STUDENTS" and distributed by New Jersey Voters for McCarthy. Our emphasis.)

Kennedy, who is probably smarter, pays lip service to "equality and justice." Needless to say, he didn't do too well as Attorney General - although he did once indict some SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) organizers.

5) Are they men of integrity? Let the facts speak for themselves. Kennedy's unmitigated opportunism has come out so often - most recently in his waiting until McCarthy won in New Hampshire before deciding he had to follow his conscience (and become President?) - Kennedy's opportunism is by now legendary. McCarthy, who is less known, has yet to become a legend. Nevertheless, the Mar. 27, 1968 New York Times reported that volunteers in Wisconsin are quitting over McCarthy's refusal to take a stand against white racism. Why won't he?

At a staff meeting in Milwaukee last Sunday, Curtis Gans, the staff director, took the position that the Senator should not make a major statement on civil rights until after the Wisconsin primary . . . The major factor was the fear of arousing opposition in the heavily German and Polish wards of Milwaukee.

Of these two men, Kennedy is by far the more powerful and his bid for the Presidency should be taken very seriously. The Kennedy line is far more skillful than Johnson's - he combines total ruthlessness with a more palatable style, a slightly left veneer. The worst thing that could happen to the anti-war movement would be for it to fall in behind this liberal-clothed imperialist.

US  
GET OUT OF  
VIETNAM  
NOW!

THE VIETNAMESE AGREE TO TALKS

After the previous article was written, Johnson announced his refusal to accept renomination and a partial "de-escalation". These were smart moves on his part. They put the loyal opposition led by Kennedy and McCarthy in a bizarre position. These forces have never argued for goals different from Johnson's. They stand for U.S. domination of Asia and therefore a strong U.S. "presence" in Vietnam. Kennedy and McCarthy differed from Johnson only on timing - and, of course, over the question of which particular imperialist, themselves or Johnson, would run the imperialist show. But now Johnson has (at least for now) removed the figure (himself) in opposition to whom the "doves" defined themselves; he has removed himself to an angelic sphere "above" politics where he no longer appears to threaten liberals. At the same time, he calls for "peace" talks through "de-escalation." This leaves the "doves" with no threat to oppose and no differences that they can pretend exist.

This supports our contention, discussed earlier, that the war is imperialist. One of the main arguments for the view that the war is not imperialist has been that Johnson's stupidity and egomania have kept the U.S. in Vietnam. Withdrawing from the presidential race is hardly the act of a man controlled by his ego; much less is it the act of a fool.

Here is RFK's reaction to Johnson's March 31 speech:

I fervently hope that your new efforts for peace in Vietnam will succeed. Your decision regarding the presidency subordinates self to country and is truly magnanimous. I respectfully and earnestly request an opportunity to visit you as soon as possible to discuss how we might work together in the interest of national unity during the coming months, the telegram said.  
(Boston Globe, Tuesday, April 2, 1968)

McCarthy's reaction was similar. This supports our position that the "split" in the ruling class is over timing. With Johnson's "new" stand, even that appears to have vanished.

THE VIETNAMESE RESPOND

Previously, when the U.S. announced "de-escalation", aimed at achieving talks, there was a fairly sustained pause in the bombing. During one such pause, in Feb. 1967, the Vietnamese agreed to talk if the halt were made permanent. The U.S. then demanded "reciprocal action" by the DRV-NLF forces before a permanent bombing halt and talks could begin. The DRV refused and the bombing has continued ever since.

Now, instead of stopping the bombing, the U.S. is bombing "only" within the first 200 miles of the DRV! The quantity of bombing remains unchanged; only the locale has been shifted. That is, the bombing has been concentrated. For in fact, the U.S. aim in this bombing is to

prevent supplies from passing through the southern DRV to areas of intense fighting south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Even Sen. Fulbright commented that the bombing cutback "as of no consequence and certainly not an inducement for the North to come to the conference table." (Boston Globe, April 2, 1968)

This "de-escalation" has been accompanied by a large call-up of reserves - yet the DRV has announced it is ready to meet with U.S. representatives to discuss a total end to the bombing and the beginning of talks!

What has happened?

#### NEGOTIATIONS FOR WITHDRAWAL?

Having come to identify with the Vietnamese people's magnificent struggle, many in the anti-war movement will support this Vietnamese response. There are several arguments in favor of the Vietnamese stand.

Argument 1. The DRV and NLF stand for immediate U.S. withdrawal. They have agreed to talk because they realize the U.S. is ready to withdraw, and only refrains from admitting this to save face. Under cover of negotiations, which will save U.S. prestige, the Vietnamese can get the U.S. government to agree to immediate withdrawal.

If the U.S. were in fact ready to withdraw, this argument might appear valid. But as we showed earlier, the necessity of maintaining a strong U.S. "presence" in Vietnam is precisely what all imperialists - from Kennedy to Johnson - agree on. There is no evidence to the contrary in any of their statements. Moreover, the U.S. government's reasons for being in Vietnam are very good. Holding Vietnam is not a dream of a few crazed LBJ types, but a key strategic goal of imperialism as a whole.

Argument 2. Of course the U.S. won't withdraw. The Vietnamese leaders know this - but many other people do not. Once negotiations begin, the Vietnamese will put forward the demand for immediate withdrawal. They will refuse to back down or discuss anything else. Then the U.S. will break off talks, and U.S. unwillingness to withdraw will be exposed before the world.

This is also fallacious. Before January, 1967, the Vietnamese did indeed demand immediate withdrawal. Since then they have buried this proposal in favor of a call to "stop the bombing and negotiate." U Thant has pointed out that the Vietnamese tell him they are ready to "come to terms" to negotiate "in good faith" meaning to give and take on "all outstanding issues." The world has been prepared, therefore, for bargaining between the two sides, expecting the Vietnamese to make major concessions in the interests of world "peace." If the Vietnamese were in fact to revert to a "rigid" stand of unconditional and immediate withdrawal the U.S. could break off negotiations and self-righteously declare: "We have to escalate. These commies promise to talk turkey, and instead, when they get you to the table, they refuse to budge an inch." The Vietnamese, not the U.S. imperialists, would be "exposed" in this situation.

The only way to expose U.S. unwillingness to withdraw from Vietnam

is to advocate such withdrawal, and as the DRV did prior to 1967, to fight a protracted war to force the U.S. out. This would necessitate a sharp explanation of the nature of imperialism, the reasons for its war against the Vietnamese, and the impossibility of peace with those who kill through war and exploitation. Internally, such clarification would prepare the Vietnamese people for the necessity of protracted war, expanding to the rest of Asia and other parts of the world, before the U.S. could be driven out. Externally, this would help the world-wide anti-war movement understand the necessity of being thoroughly anti-imperialist. On the contrary, the Vietnamese have not prepared their own people. For example, in a documentary on the DRV by the pro-Vietnamese author Felix Greene, a peasant whose home had been destroyed asked: "Why are the Americans fighting us? Why won't they leave us in peace?" The knowledge of why the U.S. is in Vietnam should have been made the property of all Vietnamese. And similarly, outside the country, the Vietnamese have never put forward this knowledge.

If the U.S. were ready to withdraw, it would, in keeping with the pre-1967 stand of the Vietnamese, be entirely proper for U.S. and Vietnamese representatives to meet. They would not bargain, but discuss how U.S. forces could be removed in the fastest and safest way.

#### NEGOTIATIONS: FOR THE PEACE THAT KILLS!

There is overwhelming evidence that the Vietnamese will not demand immediate withdrawal during talks. Rather they will negotiate U.S. presence in Vietnam.

First of all, there is the negative evidence discussed above. If the Vietnamese are really demanding immediate withdrawal, their actions are very foolish and very misinformed. In fact, the Vietnamese leaders are very smart, and very, very well informed. They are famous for their keen understanding of their enemies.

There is also much positive evidence. Their past actions, since 1967, indicate Vietnamese willingness to bargain U.S. presence in their country. This evidence was presented earlier. Without rehashing these points let us consider recent statements and actions of the Vietnamese.

The declaration in which the DRV announced its willingness to meet with U.S. representatives is very revealing. The statement began with a largely rhetorical account of the Vietnamese struggle against imperialism. The first reference to recent events is as follows:

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. neo-colonialism in South Vietnam. Nothing can save the U.S. aggressors from a total defeat." (Boston Globe, April 3, 1968, our emphasis.)

And a little later:

The Vietnamese people's fight for independence and freedom has entered a new period. The United States defeat is already evident. (ibid.)

Thus the DRV statement maintains that its all over except the talking. Given that the U.S. has not been driven out of Vietnam and won't withdraw, the real meaning of the "new phase" is: a period during which talks will restore "peace" to South Vietnam at the expense of maintaining the U.S. in that area.

This analysis is unfortunately strengthened by statements by the Russians in London:

Hanoi had already assured the United States privately that it would open no major offensive if all American bombing attacks were halted.

The Soviet sources were further quoted as having said that North Vietnam had begun to lift its siege of the Marine garrison at Khe Sanh, in the northwest corner of South Vietnam, as a sign of Hanoi's goodwill. American officials said that they had no independent confirmation of the report.

Officials here were encouraged that North Vietnamese troops had thinned out around Khe Sanh and that an American column was encountering little resistance in approaching the garrison. But they asserted that this was not part of a deliberate prearranged pattern of mutual battlefield de-escalations by Washington and Hanoi.

There was some speculation that President Johnson might have regarded the easing of the seige at Khe Sanh as a signal from Hanoi that justified the reduction of bombing. But officials insisted this was not the case. (NY Times, April 5, 1968)

The U.S. denials sound very feeble. In any event, U.S. officials are only denying that the events were prearranged, not that the Vietnamese have eased their siege. The fact that the Vietnamese are letting up their Dienbienphu-type encirclement of Khe Sanh solidly supports the view that the Tet offensive and the siege itself, were bargaining points to encourage Johnson to ease his position on the timing of talks. These actions do not appear to be a stage in a protracted war to get the U.S. out. They look like chess moves by the Vietnamese leaders, escalations from which they can now back down to achieve a total bombing halt and start bargaining with the imperialists.

On April 5, the Globe printed a story including the following Russian statement:

The Soviet Government believes that in its statement, the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam indicates a realistic way to ending the war in Vietnam, to a political settlement in the interests of the

Vietnamese people, in the interests of a normal situation in Southeast Asia," the Kremlin announcement said.

And the DRV statement agreed that their goal was:

...the defense of peace in Indochina, Southeast Asia and the world." (Globe, April 3, 1968)

But the war in Vietnam is not a matter of pure violence. It is a political war (like all wars) "the extension of politics by other means" as the military theorists put it. The U.S. government's aim is to secure control of Asia for imperialist exploitation and to suppress revolutionary forces which threaten that exploitation, as discussed earlier. But the Vietnamese need to throw the U.S. out to develop their country freed from imperialist oppression. Thus the Vietnamese aim cannot be to establish "peace", i.e., to end the war even though the U.S. will remain in Vietnam and expand its fighting in other Asian areas.

It is very clear from Soviet statements and actions over the past few years that they have been pushing very hard for peace with U.S. presence, a peace that kills. To see them rejoice now in Vietnamese acceptance of such terms is horrifying.

But how can the Vietnamese lose? Many people argue that the military situation in Vietnam is so far gone that it is impossible for the U.S. to maintain its "presence" there.

This is a fundamental misestimate of people's war. The basis for victory in people's war is the political awareness of the people. Such wars always begin, for example, with the imperialists possessing overwhelming military superiority, fighting with modern arms and vast armies against small groups of ill-armed peasants and working people. These small groups can only reverse that military superiority by relying on the tremendous strength of the masses of people who are hurt by imperialism. Revolutionaries lead those people, through struggle, to understand the character of the enemy and the need to drive him out. Thus they unleash tremendous forces, capable of completely smashing the imperialists. Precisely because the people's victory depends on politics, politics can defeat the people no matter what the "purely military" situation. Thus the U.S. was completely encircled at Khe Sanh. But by a political decision that siege has been eased. Whereas U.S. forces previously were completely boxed in at Khe Sanh, with relief virtually impossible, now:

A battalion of U.S. marines surged 1.5 miles out of Khe Sanh yesterday and seized a Communist-vacated hill ...They met no resistance...The allied infantry-tank juggernaut pushing up Highway 9 was reported only two miles from the base Thursday in Operation Pegasus, code name for the relief operation. (UPI release, Record American, April 5, 1968)

As a report of an interview with DRV and NLF officials in Prague, published in "War/Peace Report", March, 1968, points out, the Vietnamese

are aiming at a coalition government with U.S. and U.N. forces holding various cities and bases for a long period. This would allow the U.S. to break down the unity of the south vietnamese, using bribes to buy off rightist elements in the very broad NLF, and systematically attacking strongholds of the more radical elements. Over a long period the U.S. could forge an anti-revolutionary coalition to run south Vietnam in the interests of imperialism. Meanwhile, with huge quantities of troops released from active war duty, the U.S. could turn its attention to Laos, Thailand, Burma, the Phillipines, India, and other areas in the early or advanced stages of People's War. What the U.S. could not win in outright war would be won in this "peaceful" situation.

The U.S. cannot reverse the military situation. Bad politics among the Vietnamese can.

### REVISIONISM: LEANING THE HARD WAY

But why would the Vietnamese sell-out?

The answer to this question is difficult to give in a short space. It lies in the nature of what Communists call "revisionism" and the meaning of opposing it.

What is revisionism?

Some strikes are broken by the boss because he can hold out longer than the workers. Some are broken by the government, when the boss can't do the job. But most strikes are in fact never mainly defeated from without. They are basically sold out from within, by the trade union "leaders" themselves.

These are often men who got power in their unions by appearing or actually being quite militant. Sometimes they were phonies from the start. But a trade union leader can make a lot of money. If he never learns the necessity of sharp class struggle leading, in the long run, to the total destruction of the government which runs things for the boss, if he gives in to the constant enticement of bribes from the boss, even a militant can become a sell-out. This can only be prevented if revolutionaries lead workers to grasp the political realities of imperialism so those workers become themselves the guarantee against sell-outs by leaders who have gone over to the enemy.

Revisionism is the theory and practice of selling-out the people covered over with communist phraseology. As such, it represents the interests of exploiters against the oppressed. The history of the revolutionary movement demonstrates that, as long as there are exploited and exploiting classes, the revolutionary leaders of the oppressed can become revisionists, can betray the interests of the working people, can take the side of imperialists. Thus in the early 20th century, many leaders of the once-revolutionary European socialist parties became pro-imperialist. In European parliaments, most representatives of the old socialist parties voted for the First World War. It had long been agreed among revolutionaries that the coming war was a war among imperialists, a war for the division of the world's working people and resources among themselves. The socialist parties had

agreed that the workers had to use the situation of Imperialist war to launch revolutions against their "own" capitalist class. And after World War I, when workers began to take sharp revolutionary action in Germany, it was these revisionists who sided with the most reactionary forces in Germany to completely smash the working people.

Revisionism is presented by the American press as a swear word used by rigid Marxist-Leninists to smear their more "creative" brothers. Thus to oppose revisionism is to be an ideological fanatic. In fact, revisionism is not marxist creativity. It opposes, in the particular context of a given struggle, the fundamental notions of marxism which make it revolutionary. Against class struggle, revisionism upholds peace between oppressors and oppressed. Despite the constantly repeated historical lesson that no class gives up power without revolution, the revisionists hold that reform can bring the working people to power. Against the Marxist-Leninist notion that people, people oppressed by imperialism and not technique or weaponry, can defeat imperialism, the revisionists uphold the notion that weapons are the main thing and the political awareness of the people is of minor significance. (In practice, this means that revisionism wants to keep the people politically "innocent" so they can be misled.) When such people "lead" the revolutionary movement, they can hurt it more than imperialism. When the imperialists attack the people, the latter can learn lessons from such attacks and fight back harder. But when revisionists establish a strong following among the people, they can use their position to prevent key lessons from being learned, to get the people to follow their wrong ideas, and thereby demoralize and sell out the revolution. Misprepared and demoralized by revisionist leadership, the people can be smashed by imperialists' tactics of violence and bribery. Thus, during World War II revisionist forces in the American Communist Party (CP), arguing that since the war was a just war against fascism (which was true), no class struggle in the U.S. was acceptable (false), dissolved sharecroppers' groups all over the south. The sharecroppers, left in the lurch, unprepared for a sharp fight, were literally slaughtered by police and vigilante forces.

In recent years, revisionism has become the dominant force in most old communist parties - including most of those in power. The result has been tremendous setbacks for the movement. Thus the willingness of the European and Soviet revisionists to ease up the struggle in Europe meant that the U.S. could move huge numbers of Europe-based troops to Vietnam. Thus Russia gave large-scale aid to the Indonesian fascists, after they had slaughtered half a million reds and their followers, discussed earlier. Thus the deals between southern American communist parties and the military dictatorships in their countries. Thus the support of the revisionist American CP for Kennedy and McCarthy, and its attempt to swing the anti-war movement behind these imperialists. Thus the tremendous pressure the Soviets applied to get the Vietnamese to back down from their original four point stand for immediate withdrawal, to their present one-point, sell-out position.

Revisionism, therefore, is not an abstraction, an ideological heresy from which purists draw back in horror. It is the organized, systematic attempt by those who have sold-out to imperialism to betray the revolution from within. It can be seen, by observation, that revisionism develops in all revolutionary movements. To let it take the

lead is to let the theory and practice of counter-revolution, of imperialism, lead the anti-imperialist movement.

In this stage in the development of the communist movement, more than at any time, to fight revisionism is crucial. Unless one defeats its ideological influence in and practical leadership of the movement, the movement must be reversed, must be turned from anti- to pro-imperialist.

It is clear, more and more, that revisionism is very strong in Vietnam. There are a number of ways we can see this.

First, the fact that the North Vietnamese leaders do not struggle against revisionism. There is no way of conducting this struggle secretly. The intensity of the fight in the world communist movement between the revolutionary and the opportunist, the revisionist position, is tremendous. Therefore, the thing that most clearly marks the revolutionary forces within that movement today is that they wage a sharp struggle, both theoretically and in day to day practice, against revisionism. This means criticizing a revisionist approach as it develops out of the mistakes of basically solid revolutionaries, as well as sharply opposing the theory and practice of the world-wide revisionist movement. But the Vietnamese have been notable for their abstention from that struggle. Their stand has been (somewhat favorably) presented in the Western press as a "third" socialist path. There can be no such third path. In America, for example, Progressive Labor opposes the class privilege of 2S as unjust and a thing which divides students and workers. The revisionist Communist Party supports 2S. What is the third path here? Similarly, revolutionary forces call for the total elimination of U.S. influence in Vietnam. The revisionists argue that this is too extreme, that it is unreasonable, that a deal maintaining U.S. presence is the only way. Where is the third path here?

Secondly, the Vietnamese go further. Not only don't they attack revisionism internationally - they support it, although this support is somewhat veiled. Thus Ho Chi Minh sent a telegram wishing success to the recent Soviet sponsored congress of revisionist parties, called to attack the revolutionary part of the communist movement, especially China. Again, the DRV consistently invites the worst sell-outs, revisionists from all over the world, to visit Vietnam. Then they can return, their influence greatly enhanced by the prestige of the Vietnamese struggle.

Thirdly, the Vietnamese don't fight revisionism in their own country. There are two ways we can tell this. One way is by reading their literature. A struggle against revisionism cannot be waged in private. Its absence from Vietnamese publications means its absence from the efforts of the Vietnamese leaders. A second way is by considering what it means to accept Soviet aid. Nobody gives aid without strings. Even if the Soviet aid were without explicit strings (and Burchett's statement, quoted earlier by Theodore Draper), indicates this is hardly the case), there is the unspoken "string": do something against me or what I represent, and I'll remove aid. You can't expect a man to lend you money if you spit in his face. The Soviets would never give aid to those who fight revisionism - that was precisely

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why they cut off aid to China in 1960.

And this acceptance of Soviet aid, in turn, gives the revisionists a tremendous boost around the world. "Don't tell me the USSR's leadership is counter-revolutionary! Don't they help the Vietnamese?" This involves, of course, a fundamental misestimate of why the Russians give that aid. As the U.S. knows, that Russian aid enables the Vietnamese to shoot down a few planes is secondary. For it also allows Russian (revisionist) influence to become much stronger in Vietnam; it builds the prestige of sell-outs all over the world; it confuses people about revisionism, so they see it as less militant communism instead of as disguised counter-revolution; it prevents the Vietnamese from fighting revisionism within their own country, for if they fight, they lose the aid. The more aid accepted, the stronger it shows that revisionism has become, the harder it is for wavering forces to accept the hardships of rejecting the aid, the greater the influence of revisionism in Vietnam can become. The circle is vicious: the end result is the defeat of the Vietnamese.

"But why not unite with revisionism?" some people argue. "After all, does someone have to agree completely for you Maoists to unite with him?"

Of course not. Revolutions develop in stages. To make revolutions, communists must unite groups of people whose needs may dictate very different long-term goals, but who, within that stage, can unite in a common struggle against a common enemy. Thus, in Vietnam, workers and peasants unite with various elements like small shop keepers and anti-U.S. businessmen against imperialism. That's one thing. But uniting with revisionism is another. Revisionism means selling out the struggle on whatever level. Revisionism isn't a class; rather, its leadership rests on the opportunism present in all classes. It acts to get various groups to function in the least revolutionary way. To unite with revisionism is as bad as uniting with imperialism.

If the Vietnamese leaders opposed revisionism, denounced it, fought it internally and externally, and refused aid from it, the absence of that aid would probably mean a slightly more difficult situation in the "purely military" sense. (Of course, the weakness of the U.S. is not "purely military" anyway; the few planes that the SAM's shoot down can easily be replaced.) But the struggle against revisionism would greatly strengthen the Vietnamese politically. It would strengthen people all over the world politically. And that, after all, is how you win a people's war in the first place.

#### WHAT WILL HAPPEN? WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

The situation that will emerge in Vietnam as a result of negotiations for a U.S. presence will undoubtedly be very complex. Although the revisionists have the upper hand in the Vietnamese communist party (north and south), and therefore tremendous influence, most Vietnamese are committed to fighting imperialism, and many Vietnamese communists are against revisionism. The revisionists will be able to set the struggle back. But we have no doubt that - in the long run - the struggle will fully reassert itself, as the Vietnamese learn to see through revisionists among their leaders. However, there is no question

that between now and "the long run" many Vietnamese people will suffer unnecessarily as a result of a sell-out.

What does all this mean for the situation in the U.S.? It means serious problems for an anti-imperialist movement. Negotiations may begin immediately, they may temporarily break off and be resumed under a Kennedy or McCarthy or Nixon, (Nixon, incidentally, has nothing but praise for the Soviet role in Vietnam.) In any case, they will tend to bury the demand for immediate withdrawal. Large scale movement will be launched by the Loyal Opposition urging Johnson or Kennedy or whoever to negotiate more "liberally". Many people who had begun to see the state as their enemy, as the servant of the ruling class of owners of basic industry, many will be fooled back into viewing the system as okay, able to adjust, able to solve their problems. There is no point in anti-imperialists and revolutionaries pretending otherwise.

For precisely that reason, it would be wrong for the movement to turn away from Vietnam, to forget the issue as some are now urging. It is crucial that we provide the American people with a clear explanation of these events - difficult though it is to get these ideas across - so that some people will come out of the present situation clearer than before. And we must intensify our efforts, in practice, to build an anti-imperialist movement among black and white working people, students, and others who are hurt by the imperialist system. In that way, as Imperialism intensifies its attempts to exploit and oppress people here and abroad - including sharper wars in Vietnam and elsewhere - we will be able to serve the people by opposing those attempts.

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Appendix I

ECONOMICS OF U.S. IMPERIALISM  
AND THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE'S WAR

\* \* \*

I am an investment banker by trade, and I speak as an investment banker when I say that today's less developed nations are tomorrow's richest economic and political asset. (Former Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon, Department of State Bulletin, 5/6/58, p. 881.)

Our influence is used wherever it can be and persistently, through our Embassies on a day-to-day basis, in our aid discussion and in direct aid negotiations, to underline the importance of (U.S.) private investment. (Secretary of State Dean Rusk, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Expropriation of American-Owned Property, p. 24.)

Let me use your pages [Wall Street Journal] to make this proposal: A massive invasion of South Vietnam by American industry . . . . In the modest development effort that presently exists, a number of American-sponsored enterprises have been eminently successful. (Guy Francis Stark, chief industrial development adviser for U.S. Foreign Service in Taiwan and Saigon for ten years. Wall Street Journal, 11/11/67.)

Vietnam thus does not exist in a geographical vacuum - from it large storehouses of wealth and population can be influenced and undermined. (Henry Cabot Lodge, Boston Globe, 2/28/65.)

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The following is intended to provide some information regarding the connection between U.S. imperialism as an economic system and the Vietnam war.

Many people either are unsure of what relationship exists between U.S. economic needs and the war in Vietnam, or feel there is no connection, except possibly as a coincidence. Almost everyone acquainted with Marxists or Marxist literature has heard it said that the U.S. attempt to conquer Vietnam is the result of the needs of Imperialism for cheap labor, markets, raw materials, investment outlets - that Vietnam is strategic for preserving the U.S. economic empire's ability to satisfy those needs. But several arguments are put forward against this view. Some appear quite persuasive. Here are the essentials of those we've heard:

- (1) - The U.S. is not economically imperialist; U.S. foreign investment is of no great importance to the system as a whole; foreign investment is often more important as an aid to the development of poor countries than it is as a support of U.S. capitalism.

(2) The U.S. is economically imperialist, but mainly in Canada and Western Europe; it has no significant economic stake in the "third world" (and least of all in Asia), and doesn't need one.

(3) The U.S. may both need and practice economic imperialism on a global scale, but is not fighting in Vietnam because of this, since Vietnam has little U.S. investment and does not return enough to cover the costs of the war nor justify the political turmoil caused by the war.

The purpose of this essay is to present the factual evidence that disproves these arguments. For the theoretical explanation of why imperialism is a necessary stage of capitalism, we refer the reader to Marx's CAPITAL and Lenin's IMPERIALISM, THE HIGHEST STAGE OF CAPITALISM. Here we confine ourselves to a sketch of how U.S. capitalism has operated globally from World War II until the present, paying special attention to what is going on in Asia.

### THE EMPIRE

The U.S. economy is effectively dominated by an immensely powerful section of the population - about 0.5% of the U.S. total. But the domestic economy is not their only realm of operations. They command, as well as they can, a capitalist empire of a size unprecedented in history. For example, the British Empire at its peak represented about \$13 billion in foreign investment.<sup>2</sup> But as of 1968, the U.S. has close to \$120 billion in assets and investments abroad, half of which is in direct investment alone.<sup>3</sup> U.S. corporations depend on the existence and expansion of this huge overseas stake. The biggest of them get perhaps half their profits from it.<sup>4</sup> The total value of international production today (the total of all countries' sales and production abroad) is around \$250 billion. Some \$180 billion of this comes from U.S. plants: \$30 billion in the form of exports from the U.S. and \$150 billion produced by U.S. plants operating abroad.<sup>5</sup> The overseas capacity of American firms increased about 150% between 1957 and 1965 while manufacturing capacity within the U.S. only rose 39% during the same period.<sup>6</sup>

Obviously the ability to exploit foreign workers is a decisive one for U.S. businessmen.

### U.S. POST-WAR FOREIGN INVESTMENTS GO WHERE THE GETTING'S GOOD: AT FIRST TO WAR-RAVAGED EUROPE

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 return on investment abroad was frequently much higher than in the U.S. As earnings 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, 4/20/63, p. 70. Our emphasis - ed.)

Since the Second World War, U.S. businessmen have put about \$30 billion into Europe in Marshal Plan and other "aid". A huge sacrifice of tax money: but not for nothing. \$30 billion of private investment followed. Net result will be over \$60 billion in profits! The same pattern occurred in Japan and Canada (but with less "aid"). Not only was a killing made in these industrial countries off other capitalists' workers, but the U.S. is now one of the biggest employers in these countries and will be for some time to come. The U.S. now owns 60% of Canadian industry; 50% of all British modern industry (there are more than 1,100 U.S. subsidiaries in England); controls 80% of Europe's computer business, 90% of its microcircuit industry, 40% of its auto industry.<sup>7</sup>

This growth overseas is reflected in employment figures. While the domestic work force (production workers) grew 4% between 1957 and 1966, workers employed by U.S. firms abroad increased 38% in that time, from 3.2 million to over 6 million.<sup>10</sup>

The "developed" countries were the main arena for U.S. industrial investment in the first decade and a half after the war. American investment there grew faster than anywhere else, certainly much faster than in the stagnating and propped-up home economy. At the same time, however, these economies were developing on their own to compete with the U.S. in Europe and in the rest of the world. This international competition was one of the causes of the increased need of U.S. businessmen for increased expansion into the poor countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

### U.S. IMPERIALISM CONCENTRATES MORE AND MORE ON THE POOR COUNTRIES

With so much excess capacity already existing in the U.S., and demand growing so slowly, there is little or no reason to believe that if the \$1 billion (yearly industrial outlay) were prevented from leaving the U.S., it would be invested in more domestic capacity. (Business Week, 12/3/60.)

In the last decade we have seen a U.S. investment push in the poor countries quite comparable with the earlier post-war push in the "developed" countries. What happened?

First, the U.S. share in international trade began to slip. The U.S. share of exports of key manufactured goods from major industrial suppliers declined 10% between 1954-56 and 1961.<sup>11</sup> The U.S. share of markets in the poor countries fell between 9% and 24%.

Second, 1962 was the year that the rate of profit on U.S. investments in Europe showed a pronounced down-turn.<sup>12</sup>

Third, along with these developments, competition in the countries where the U.S. was trying to invest its capital and sell goods intensified.<sup>13</sup> As John G. McLean (Director, Continental Oil and Anderson, Clayton and Co.) put it:

Manufacturers . . . have been forced to establish plants abroad to retain their business . . . . (U.S.) industries are finding their traditional export markets pre-empted by the growth of efficient, indigenous producers. The

development of local industries abroad has...made it impossible from a competitive and economical standpoint to continue shipments from this country...<sup>14</sup>

In the last three or four years this leveling off of investment in the "developed" countries has meant that the rate of increase in over-all plant and equipment expenditures abroad by U.S. firms has slowed down. But accompanying this slow down in the "developed" areas, there has been a tremendous shift to the poor countries. This is not to say that the U.S. and other capitalist countries didn't drain the so-called Third World of its labor and resources before 1957-58.

In order to stay in the race with other capitalist countries, the U.S. had to exploit to a greater extent the competitive advantage of producing abroad, using, more and more, the cheap labor of the poor countries. It also stepped up on milking foreign resources. A government research team in 1952 found that the U.S. then imported for its domestic consumption alone: 94% of its manganese, 100% of its chromite, 98% of its cobalt, 86% of its nickel, 43% of its tungsten, 78% of its tin, and 85% of its aluminum bauxite. The U.S. has 8% of the non-Socialist population but it planned at that time to reserve for its own consumption between 50% and 100% of the world's mineral resources.<sup>15</sup> Rubber, foodstuffs of numerous types, etc., might be added to this list.

TODAY, the imperialist economy which built itself off reserving and grabbing the resources of others, now has at its disposal the immense capital accumulated over the past half century. It wishes to take over the economies of the poor countries with the hard capital thus accumulated

IN THE YEARS 1950 TO 1965, THE U.S. INVESTED \$9 BILLION IN THE POOR COUNTRIES AND BROUGHT BACK ABOUT \$25.6 BILLION TO THE U.S. IN PROFITS. A lot of this came from raw materials extraction and from petroleum-- although this was less true toward the latter part of the period. To put this in perspective, let's compare it with "developed"-country sites of U.S. investment. U.S. businesses exported \$14.9 billion to Europe and Canada in this period but brought back only \$11.4 billion in profits! Direct investments in the poor countries, although \$6 billion less, yielded \$14.2 billion more in the profits they brought back to the U.S. The rate of profit is obviously very much higher in the poor countries.<sup>16</sup>

#### LATIN AMERICA WAS THE MAIN TARGET AFTER EUROPE

After the industrialized countries, Latin America was the next target for sustained plunder by industrial capital from the U.S. In 1946, according to the boastful speech of Spruille Braden (former Assistant Secretary of State) to an executives' club, the U.S. held \$3 billion in direct private investments in Latin America. 76% of it was in manufacturing, public utilities, minerals and oil.<sup>17</sup> Latin America now began to be even more the apple of the finance-capitalists' eye than Europe. Business Week summarizes (10/14/67): "U.S. companies are slowing down the pace of their investment build-up in Europe, and shifting more attention to Latin America. Surprisingly, the up-turn in investment in Latin America is stronger in manufacturing than in mining, and at least on a par with oil."

This investment involves taking over all major banking facilities , and, for instance, the establishment of huge petrochemical and auto plants.<sup>18</sup> It moves into Latin America at a pace of over half a billion dollars a year. In addition to this investment, Latin America provides a \$3.5 billion a year market for U.S. exports.

"Without forgetting the conditional and relative value of all definitions in general, which can never embrace all the concatenations of a phenomenon in its complete development, we must give a definition of imperialism that will include the following five of its basic features: 1) the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life; 2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this "finance capital," of a financial oligarchy; 3) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance; 4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist combines which share the world among themselves, and 5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed.

Imperialism is capitalism in that stage of development in which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital has established itself; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun; in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed. (p.105)

Monopolies, oligarchy, the striving for domination instead of striving for liberty, the exploitation of an increasing number of small or weak nations by a handful of the richest or most powerful nations - all these have given birth to those distinctive characteristics of imperialism which compel us to define it as parasitic or decaying capitalism. More and more prominently there emerges, as one of the tendencies of imperialism, the creation of the "rentier state," the usurer state, in which the bourgeoisie to an ever increasing degree lives on the proceeds of capital exports and by "clipping coupons." It would be a mistake to believe that this tendency to decay precludes the rapid growth of capitalism. It does not. In the epoch of imperialism, certain branches of industry, certain strata of the bourgeoisie and certain countries betray, to a greater or lesser degree, now one and now another of these tendencies. On the whole, capitalism is growing far more rapidly than before; but this growth is not only becoming more and more uneven in general, its unevenness also manifests itself, in particular, in the decay of the countries which are richest in capital (England). (p.150)

(V.I. Lenin, Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism, Foreign Languages Press, Peking)

THE FAR EAST: CHEAP LABOR RESERVOIR



That empire in Southeast Asia is the last major resource area outside the control of any one of the major powers on the globe...I believe that the condition of the Vietnamese people, and the direction in which their future may be going, are at this stage secondary, not primary. (Sen. McGee, D-Wyo., in the U.S. Senate, 2/17/65)

The Far East now stands where Latin America stood in 1946. There is approximately the same volume of direct investment in manufacturing and oil but it's increasing at a greater rate. And Asia has some important advantages. As a market for U.S. goods, the Far East (without Japan) is worth about \$3 billion--in the same league with the Latin American market. This is the selling end. On the buying end: one Asian commodity, labor power, is beginning to compete for first place with oil, tin, rubber, etc. A U.S. capitalist can buy a pair of hands which will work a ten hour day in, for example, his 1,000 man Motorola factory in South Korea, 19 for pennies a day, for half the already low Latin American wage-rates!

Despite increased competition from Japanese capitalists in the Far East, the U.S. of late is becoming economically dominant in inter-imperialist competition in that area. In India for instance the U.S. is now the main capital-importer.

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THE POOR GET POORER: WONDER WHY?

Wall Street Journal, 1/31/68, pp.1 & 21. - Since 1965 the GNP's of Ghana and Indonesia declined 5%. There was no increase in India. In Brazil and Kenya there was only a 1% increase since 1965. Average prices of raw commodities exported by poor countries have dropped 7% in the last decade.

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IMPERIALIST "DEVELOPMENT" OF POOR COUNTRIES MAKES THEM POORER

What happens when U.S. bankers and industrialists move in on an entire Far Eastern economy with the purpose of bringing profits back to the U.S.? The effects are simple economically. They destroy what was there. If there was petty-production of clothing and household items, and food production, it is gradually disintegrated by the inflation caused by their presence, driven out of business by the competition their products represent. In general, the effect - e.g., in the case of India - is to destroy the subsistence economy, make the country more and more dependent on the U.S. for food, and gobble up all development capital. Very few Indian workers are taken up in the "new industry" imperialism has brought, many are driven from the land. Huge numbers have been made landless and jobless. Their numbers are swelling.<sup>20</sup>

India's growth of per capita output for 1953-60 was only 1.4% per year!<sup>21</sup>  
This is the average for all the poor countries in the last decade.<sup>22</sup>

For Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia, South Korea, the Philippines and Singapore unemployment specifically of former or aspiring wage-workers more than doubled in the first five years of the sixties. There are probably close to a million "officially" unemployed people in South Korea,<sup>23</sup> outpost of U.S. "goodness" in the East. In Rangoon and Mandalay (Burma) the number increased ten times in the same period (1960-65).

This increasing unemployment is a constant depressant on wage rates in these countries. It is the product of imperialism crushing the old economy and reducing the people to even greater misery. The purpose of agriculture becomes to produce exports, and the purpose of the people's existence, to consume imports, and to be wage-workers to increase foreign capitalists' capital and profits. The purpose of the entire country, victim of U.S. imperialism, is not to feed and clothe itself and develop, but to line the pockets of the imperialists who have too much capital at home.<sup>24</sup> The relative overproduction of capital in the United States is the cause of the "overpopulation" of the poor country. The capitalist "embarrassment of riches" is linked irreversibly with the "superfluity" of people in the Third World.

#### U.S. IMPERIALISM IS THE "GOVERNMENT" IN THE POOR COUNTRIES

The largest mass colonization movement in the history of South America will get its official blessing next month when the Bolivian Government will pass its "New Regulations for Colonization" a decree opening more than 10 million acres of virgin land...The new law was molded to encourage and facilitate colonization by foreign experts in the following fields: cattle, cotton, rice, tea, logging, vanilla, pepper, ginger, citrus fruits and poultry. The new settlers will be allowed to bring in any and all kinds of agricultural machinery, furniture and mechanized equipment duty free. (Dun & Bradstreet, Exporters' Encyclopedia supplementary service, 1/16/67)

In the old days an imperialist could only get colonies by fighting the people and establishing a colonial administration to govern the country - that administration eventually coming under attack. Nowadays imperialism rules through native political pimps, mini-despot front men who are ever so willing to sell their country and their people to the highest bidder, provided they and their cohorts get some of the crumbs. The example given in the quotation above is particularly gross evidence of what gets official blessing. "Here, take 10 million acres. We're friends." It would be hard to imagine an LBJ being as generous with 10 square feet of his ranch.

Rule through hired native puppets is the way state power is held; it's also the way industrial enterprises are managed. The result: increasing "underdevelopment" of the poor countries. The hired rulers have no interest in economic and political development for their own

people. Quite the contrary - they are there precisely to keep the people from smashing imperialism and really developing their countries under the rule of working and farming people. Millions of people remain idle and starve because their economies have been politically paralyzed so that imperialism in its own time can slowly devour their labor and resources.

### U.S. IMPERIALISM IN VIETNAM

U.S. Agency for International Development extended risk guarantees, as well as specific risk guarantees (for U.S. private investors) against losses from incon - vertibility, expropriation, and war, revolution or insurrection are available for Vietnam. In Fiscal Year 1966, AID issued eight guarantees totalling U.S. \$491,000 of which U.S. \$113,000 covered incon - vertibility, U.S. \$189,000 covered expropriation and U.S. \$189,000 covered war. (Morgan Guaranty Trust Co., Doing Business Abroad, Nov. 1967)

The countries of Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, are the latest frontier for U.S. investment. In Vietnam itself between 1960 and 1965 \$100 million of private investment was put in, even before military control of the country looked anywhere near completed.<sup>25</sup> Vimytex, owned by M.P. Jen of 30 Church St., NYC, has a textile mill employing 2,000 workers. Johnson & Johnson runs another textile mill. Parsons & Whittemore runs a paper mill. Sugar mill pioneer Herbert Fuller promoted a \$10 million operation at the coastal city of Tuy Hao. "'I am in it for the money,' Fuller says. 'We could get back our investment in two years.' Like all entrepreneurs, Fuller once again is pushing ahead with his plans because he assumes that the U.S. is now committed to saving South Vietnam." (Fortune Magazine, March 1966) In any case, he's probably AID-insured against revolution...

Foremost Dairies, Allis-Chalmers, International Harvester and others have also moved in to get at that maximum wage set by the Saigon labor code at \$1.40 a day. A construction consortium is building the only occupied base area and military rear that the U.S. can get in Vietnam--one made of concrete not people. This operation employs almost 50,000 Vietnamese workers, on the job 60 hours per week--at a maximum weekly wage of \$8.40.

Under the Investment Law of 1963, profits of up to 20% of the invested capital may be transferred annually to the U.S. (Capital may be repatriated after five years at an annual rate of up to 20% if the capital was brought in after 1963 and after 20 years if held previously in Vietnam.) Dividends may be transferred in full after taxes are paid.<sup>26</sup>

This "law" passed by the U.S.-controlled Saigon "government" is typical of red-carpet treatment the U.S. government guarantees its investors in most of the poor countries. There is little doubt in the government that investment will come much faster once Southeast Asia is "pacified".

The long-range perspective of U.S. big owners is typified by M.L. Long, a top manager of Philco-Ford's stake-out in Vietnam. Right now the company is working on government contracts worth \$32 million a year and employing some 3,000 Vietnamese and Korean workers. But they set their sights firmly on private, civilian business in Vietnam. "Given a fairly early end to the Vietnam war and a long-term U.S. economic commitment to Southeast Asia, Long looks forward to getting some \$1.7 billion in business throughout the area through 1971." (Business Week, 9/9/67)

Other examples of U.S. businesses in the Far East can be found by examining sources cited in the bibliography of this article.

### WHY THE WAR IN VIETNAM

He who holds or has influence in Vietnam can affect the future of the Philippines and Formosa to the east, Thailand and Burma with their huge rice surpluses to the west, and Malaysia and Indonesia with their rubber, ore and tin to the South. Vietnam thus does not exist in a geographical vacuum--from its large storehouses of wealth and population can be influenced and undermined. (Henry Cabot Lodge, former U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, Boston Globe, 2/28/65)

The U.S. clearly has the same imperialist economic designs on Vietnam as on other poor countries. However, it is not our contention that the war in Vietnam is being fought only for the sake of actual or potential market and investment opportunities in Vietnam itself. Holding Vietnam is part of the job of holding the whole empire of U.S. capitalist imperialism. The imperialists did not choose Vietnam as the most favorable (from the U.S. point of view) place to fight. Rather, Vietnam is, in spite of the subjective desires of the imperialists, the place where international class struggle is sharpest. The Vietnamese people are waging a heroic People's War to liberate their country. The imperialists regard this phenomenon with the same fear that one regards a small opening in an important dike. They, and we, will regard the victory of the Vietnamese People's War as the turning of the tide in the struggle of the world's people against U.S. imperialism. U.S. imperialism is precisely what is at stake in Vietnam. The imperialists need to win in Vietnam for four reasons:

- 1) To obtain the labor and wealth of Vietnam itself.
- 2) To show all the peoples dominated by U.S. imperialism that revolution cannot win, that those who fight for liberation will be crushed.
- 3) To use Vietnam as a political, economic and military base for the expansion and consolidation of U.S. imperialism in Asia. A key part of the U.S. strategy in Vietnam is to use a conquered Vietnam as a stepping stone to defeating China, either by actual military conquest or as a source of pressure, to try to de-revolutionize that gigantic century of anti-imperialism. A revolutionary China is a deadly threat

to imperialism's ability to defeat revolution. A China under Imperialism's thumb would be a source of endless exploitation, a prize for imperialism.

4) To try to save the capitalist system, even in the U.S. itself, from the twin enemies of international capitalist competition and the nearing saturation point for profitable investment in the U.S.A. and the areas of world production and consumption it already controls, by reaping the highest profits in the world from Asia.

### U.S. IMPERIALISM WILL BE DEFEATED

We have shown that the tiny half of one percent of the U.S. which owns 80% of the U.S. also owns a majority of the world's resources (materials and capital) as well.<sup>27</sup> This class controls the government in the U.S. and an increasing number of governments in foreign countries. The scale of this class' domination has internationalized struggle against it and, with Marxist-Leninist leadership, against the capitalist mode of life and production it is attempting to make the world's way of life.

The development of the people's war analyzed historically in the article to which this is an appendix is the inevitable result of imperialism's content: development for profits at the expense of people. This path of revolution is being taken more and more by the farming and working people of all the poor countries. At the same time, the people of the U.S. are in the beginning of seriously organizing their own struggle for the defeat of capitalism and imperialism. The U.S. working class and its allies will form a key part of the international revolutionary struggle in defeating imperialism and building a socialist way of life.

### NEW TOOLS FOR NEW PURPOSES

David Deitch writes in his Financial column in the Boston Globe of a growing Office of Emergency Planning, a government agency. Its purpose is anticipating all sorts of contingencies that might "befall the nation" and planning a wider war in Vietnam.

"The OEP itself admits the obvious when it reports that 'relatively greater emphasis (was) given during the past year to developing a capability to meeting situations short of nuclear war.'

"...OEP began a study to determine the impact on the economy of war spending at levels of 12, 14 and 17½ percent of gross national product. The war budget is presently running close to 10% of GNP, or somewhere near \$77 billion a year. The object of the study is to determine how government war needs can be met in an expanded mobilization situation', using various types of controls.

"The demands of fighting wars of national liberation have become so pervasive that OEP found it necessary to concentrate on 'programs which have current utility and relatively less emphasis on nuclear war preparedness.'" (Globe, 1/30/68)

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(b) see Ft. nt. (13) for petrochemical complex

(c) "Bankers Trust acquires 49% of Argentine finance firm..."  
in Wall Street Journal 1/18/68 p.12

(d) see Business Week 2/17/68 p.145 for story on big 3 U.S. auto companies ploughing into Brazil. Business Week 11/18/67 for same in South Africa.

(19) see Business Abroad 2/5/68. This size plant and the type of production is typical for the Far East. Other more old fashioned types are steel mills in Korea and copper mines in Indonesia. The scale is large, evidence that the perspective is long-range, expectations even larger. The National Foreign Trade Convention in late 1967 was reported in Business Abroad for 11/13/67. They viewed the Far East and Indonesia in particular as "the world's largest new frontier for international business."

(20) see A.G. Frank, Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America 1967 on these points. Much of this book applies to the Far East poor countries as well. A typical situation in Chile is described by the historian Ramirez as he quotes from Chilean President Balmaceda (1886): "The idea of national industry is associated with...building...a home for a large class of our people...the working class which roams the countryside (and)...in times of possible social agitation can intensely disturb the peace of mind." Frank, p.79, a veritable army of the surplus population!

(21) see J.E. Meade, The Economic Journal vol. 77 #306 p.249

(22) see also David A. Baldwin, Economic Development and American Foreign Policy 1943-62. Chicago, 1966. Poor countries' per capita GNP grew at 1% per year in the 50's. p.134. Also Mountjoy, Industrialization and Underdeveloped Countries London 1966. On the case of big U.S. investment side by side poverty of the people in Chile pp. 155-6

(23) (a) based on Business International 11/24/67 p.376

(b) In most poor countries there is a substantial advantage to wage labor if you can get it over the subsistence economy which has been destroyed. see International Labour Review 3/66 pp.281-301 article by Keji Taira.

But in Latin America the percentage of the working population which is wage-laborers is often twice the average for the Far East. The wages are twice what Far Eastern wages are. see Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1966 International Labour office, Geneva

(24) see A.G. Frank on how imperialism creates underdevelopment

(25) facts below come from: Victor Perlo, Vietnam Profiteers and Fortune 9/66

(26) Morgan Guaranty Trust Co. Doing Business Abroad

(27) see footnote (1)

Other important readings on U.S. imperialism include:

- (a) Steiner and Cannon, Multinational Corporate Planning NY 1966 ch. 8 by H.H. Fowler (treasury secretary)
  - (b) William A. Williams, Tragedy of American Foreign Policy Delta 1966: good evidence is provided on the economic basis of American policy abroad in the period before WW II.
  - (c) John Gerassi, Great Fear in Latin America Collier
  - (d) Agarwala and Singh, The Economics of Underdevelopment. chapter about unlimited quantities of labor tells a part of the story of how imperialism creates a tremendous surplus population in the poor countries. NY 1963
  - (e) "For New Opportunities: Now the Word is 'Go Abroad'". U.S. News and World Report 6/1/64 p.93
  - (f) Lenin, Imperialism
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# CONFRONTATION AT THE INDUCTION CENTER

by Paul Bail

I OPENED MY MAIL ONE MORNING and found an order to report to the Boston Army Base on March 25th for a pre-induction physical. Shortly before the physical I heard that six other men in the anti-war movement were being called down for theirs the same day. We decided to coordinate out actions.

The morning of the physical we went to the Cambridge Draft Board, where members of the Boston Draft Resistance Group were circulating among the 150 other pre-inductees, talking to them about the war and the draft. By 7:15 they had loaded us onto four chartered buses. The seven of us split up so as to reach everyone.

I waited till we were underway, then started leafletting the bus. The leaflet, signed by three of us, explained that we had given up our 2-S deferment which is used to buy off students and split them from workers; it talked about the profit motives behind the war and suggested that people could continue to organize opposition to the war in the army.

Everyone accepted a leaflet and read it. A guy from the Resistance stood up in the aisle and started to make a speech. The bus driver told him to sit down and shut up or he'd throw him off the bus. A couple of us started yelling at the driver: "Mind your own business! You're not getting drafted today!" I stood up and asked how many people were for the war. Nobody was. I explained to people what would happen inside the base:

that the army personnel would refuse to answer questions about the war, would confiscate our leaflets, would try to prevent us from speaking to the other inductees. I said we were still civilians and had a right to free speech, so what we had to do was stick together. People applauded.

Someone else got up and explained that nobody had to sign the loyalty oath, and that not signing it could delay your induction by up to six months.

A security cop waved down the bus at the gate of the Army Base. "Had any trouble?" he asked.

"Yeah, I've got some garbage on this bus," he said.

Someone in the back of the bus asked what the driver had said. "He said we're all garbage," I yelled. The other guys on the bus started cursing him. Two security cops got on the bus. "These boys been behaving themselves?" they asked. People on the bus started yelling at them. "That's the American way of life," someone said, "Open your mouth and they call the cops."

The six other pre-inductees who had met beforehand also leafletted

and made speeches on their buses. As the buses were unloading at the induction center, ten girls who had infiltrated the Army Base shook hands with the pre-inductees. "Good luck," they said, "I hope you don't get sent to Vietnam." When the cops tried to throw them out, they whipped out from inside their coats pillowcases decorated with slogans like "No Draft For Vietnam" and "G.I.'s Die While Business Profits."

Meanwhile inside the Induction Center, on the third floor, the army personnel were having a tough time controlling the 150 Cambridge pre-inductees, who were milling around, heckling the sargeant who was handing out the folders. "Why are we in Vietnam?" a pre-inductee asked. "I don't know," said the sargeant.

Someone was pounding on the wall of Testing Room A, where an army officer was giving an orientation lecture. The sargeant tried to throw him out, but the other pre-inductees yelled at him to leave the guy alone. Twenty people came out of Testing Room A to see what was happening. Army personnel were running around trying to get everyone back into their testing rooms.

There were about 50 pre-inductees in my testing room. They were making jokes against the war, and throwing around paper airplanes made out of anti-war leaflets. A young corporal came into the room to try to quiet us down. Several people heckled him. "Careful, he'll hit you with his stick," someone said. Everyone laughed. He gave up and left the room.

The sargeant, flanked by two young corporals, came in. One of us was passing out leaflets again. "Take that man away," he said. The pre-inductees yelled at the sargeant. "Where are you

taking him?" "Leave him alone; he's not doing anything." "What's the Army afraid of anyways?" One of us got up and took a photograph. He was dragged out.

It took the sargeant about twenty minutes to restore some semblance of order. A security cop came in to take away the fellow who'd been pounding against the wall earlier. Several pre-inductees started yelling at the sargeant to leave the fellow alone. "You guys had better shut up or you'll be thrown out too," he sputtered. We kept on yelling at him.

The last person to be thrown out was a Puerto Rican youth who accidentally banged his chair into his desk. "There's another troublemaker!" the sargeant yelled. "Get him too!"

"Don't leave till he signs a statement saying you were willing to co-operate but he threw you out without reason," we told the fellow.

"I want a statement," he said to the sargeant as four security cops grabbed him. He broke loose and threw an ashtray at them. They beat him up in the elevator.

There was an uneasy silence, then someone got up and said "I've had enough of this' shit. I'm getting out of here. Anyone else who doesn't want to get his ass shot off for Lockheed's profits can follow me." He walked out. Five minutes later the fellow from the Resistance got up, made a speech, and left.

As people were thrown off the army base they joined the picket line of about 75 anti-war pickets assembled on the sidewalk just outside the Army Base.

By about 9:15 they had restored order enough to administer the mental examination. Three of us wrote long notes to the guy who

corrects the examinations. In one of the other testing rooms someone wrote anti-war messages in his test booklet. They threw him out. In the room where the physical examination is given a student who had infiltrated the Army Base was leafletting Air Force enlistees. They threw him out.

We went to lunch around 12:00. I had a chance to talk to some of the other pre-inductees about what had happened in out testing room. They were all very upset about the way the security cops had beat up the Puerto Rican youth. One fellow pointed out that we should've tried to form a circle around him to protect him from the cops.

The physical examination started around 12:30. I was wearing a T-shirt on which I'd painted "G.I.'s Die In a Rich Man's War," and "Bring the Troops Home Now!" A medic ordered me to put my coat on so no one could see the anti-war slogans. I argued with him in a loud voice so the other pre-inductees could hear me. "What's the Army afraid of? I'm not refusing to co-operate." Finally he said he'd have me thrown off the base if I didn't put a coat on. I put my coat on, they as soon as I was out of his sight I took it off again. This went on for the rest of the afternoon.

At one point a group from Watertown was lined up for pre-induction physicals. I started passing out leaflets to them.

The medic who was lecturing them noticed me. He took the leaflets away from them and took me to an officer who confiscated my leaflets. I had more hidden in my coat pocket though.

For the next two and a half hours I talked to about 30 pre-inductees and gave away a number of leaflets. Several people saw my anti-war T-shirt. No one was hostile. Finally one of the doctors noticed that I'd been hanging around for a long time. He brought me to an officer. "This man's been mixing with the other pre-inductees. He shouldn't be given a chance to speak to them."

The officer brought me to another doctor who rushed me through the rest of the physical separately. As I was being led away several of the people I'd spoken to wished me luck.

The doctor opened my folder and found a stack of anti-war leaflets. He read one, then started to try to explain to me that he wasn't a bad guy, that he worried about the war, etc. I argued with him for a while, then he completed my forms and booked me for psychiatric examination on Monday. I later had the examination changed to Friday. I told them I'd be at the SDS National Convention on Monday. I don't know yet whether I'll be drafted or not. If so I'll continue to organize against the war, this time within the army. When I go for my psychiatric examination I plan on talking to some more inductees about the war.

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.....  
SERVE THE PEOPLE

FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM!

## PROGRESSIVE LABOR:

### BUILDING A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY OF THE WORKING CLASS

by a trade union club

The Progressive Labor Party (PLP) is trying to build a revolutionary working class-led movement. The kind of movement we are trying to build and the way in which we fight is determined by our long range goal--the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

#### Only Two Classes: Capitalists and Workers

The two most important and powerful classes in the world today are the working class and the owning class (capitalists, the bourgeoisie, the ruling class of the U=S= and other capitalist countries). These two classes are defined by their relationship to the means of production (machinery, mines, buildings, land, etc.). The capitalist class owns the means of production and needs workers to operate the machines and produce the goods. The working class, which is the overwhelming majority, is that class of people who, because they don't own the means of production are forced to sell their ability to work (labor power) in order to survive. The capitalist buys that ability to work (employs the worker) and uses it to produce goods which satisfy some human want. The capitalist takes what he gets for the products, pays for the materials, wear and tear, etc., and pays to the workers only part of the value their labor has added to these materials in making them into useful objects. The remainder is profit for the capitalist. If he paid the workers the value which their labor produced there would be nothing left for him. So he pays less --as little as he can get away with. He would like to pay just enough to keep the workers able to perform their work, which would make his profit the highest possible. What stops him from paying subsistence wages is struggle by the working class.

Struggle between these two classes is an unavoidable fact of life. Their interests are in direct contradiction to each other. The capitalist class needs to expropriate the fruits of the working class's labor in order to make profits. The needs of the working people are opposed to this capitalist expropriation of the fruits of their labor and the resultant economic, physical and cultural deprivation of the whole working class.

#### Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie

In the course of the struggles between the classes, the capitalist class (top dog for the moment) has done the things which brought many of us to condemn the whole capitalist system, not just this or that individual boss, administrator, cop or politician. Among these things are: the use of the government to protect capitalist interests through anti-labor laws, injunctions and strike-breaking; foreign wars of aggression, as in Vietnam and other countries; wherever the foreign investments of U.S. big business are threatened, along with the use of

American men, arms and money to sustain any shaky military dictatorship as long as it offers a "favorable climate" to profit-hungry U.S. big business; the use of the courts and police to put down workers and Black people struggling to better their conditions, and to protect exploiters, scabs, racists, slumlords, loan sharks, racketeers and corrupt officials; the use of the entire capitalist press to smear workers and Black people as ignorant, selfish and violent, and to promote capitalist wars, racism, anti-communism, capitalist politicians and fake "leaders" for unions, communities and Black people's organizations; the deterioration and insufficiency of public services and education, and their financing mainly through regressive taxes on workers; the use of schools and colleges to teach lies about the history of workers' and Black people's struggles or to ignore them altogether; the use of the entertainment media to present workers as fools in "situation comedies" and to glorify hoodlums, spies, killers-for-hire, cops and ultra-rich playboy and playgirl types, holding all these degenerates up as people to be respected and admired. Any of us or our readers could fill pages with examples of all these things just from our own and friends' experiences. The point is, that despite the two party system, the periodic election campaign circuses, and freedom of speech within the framework of laws against sedition, criminal anarchy and criminal syndicalism, loyalty oaths, security checks, FBI, Congressional hearings, extensive reference checks by all employers, etc., we live under a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

We do not think the word "dictatorship" is too strong. It means the holding of absolute power over others in all important activities of society, and this is just what the U.S. bourgeoisie has with its control of the economy, legal apparatus, government, schools, and mass media, backed up by the police, state troopers, national guard and regular armed forces. This economic, political, ideological and military power is what the majority of the people, Black and white workers, are up against in their day to day existence and all their various struggles.

### Dictatorship of the Proletariat

We in the Progressive Labor Party want to smash the power of the bourgeoisie and help build the institutions of working class power. We are fighting for a dictatorship of the proletariat: control of economic life, government administration, education and mass media, and the armed forces by the organized, class-conscious power of the millions of working people. This means both intensive and extensive democracy for masses of people, the ability to work, organize, fight, teach and learn in the interests of all working people, not as drudges and pawns for a small class of capitalist bosses, liars, manipulators and their armed retainers.

As for the (former) bourgeoisie under a dictatorship of the proletariat, they would be suppressed as a class. They would be denied the freedom to own the means of production, they would be denied the freedom to exploit the work of others for their own profit, they would be denied power in the government and armed forces, and they would be denied control of schools, the press and other means of propaganda for their ideas that greed, profit, racism, etc., are good, while equality, co-operativeness, workers' democracy, etc., are against the laws of God and eternal human nature. From the point of view of the

bourgeoisie, a dictatorship of the proletariat is the worst possible thing that could happen, because only a dictatorship of the proletariat threatens the final and irrevocable end to any and all forms of the exploitation of man by man. This, of course, is why the bourgeoisie and its government hate militant workers, militant Black people, anti-imperialists, honest reformers, etc., but most of all they hate communists.

### The Vanguard Party

The task of communists, of the Progressive Labor Party, is to put our Marxist-Leninist analysis of the struggle, our militancy, our abilities and our lives into the service of the people in fighting for and consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat. The party must be in practice the political vanguard of the working class, incorporating the most class-conscious, militant, revolutionary and unselfish people into a disciplined, reliable, democratic, general revolutionary headquarters. In order to achieve this, the Party members must continuously struggle against any elitism, privilege and selfishness in the Party or in its relations to the people. There is no formal or "constitutional" guarantee that a communist party will not degenerate into a purely self-serving, bourgeois organization. We have the examples of the Soviet, U.S., and other revisionist "communist" parties as examples of that possibility. The only safeguards against this are constant struggle, learning from and serving the people, leading the millions of workers, students and intellectuals in developing their understanding and organizing their power in all areas of social life. Our party, PL, should and will be judged by what it does in practice, by whether or not it serves the people and builds their power, not just by what it proclaims as its ideals. Everyone is familiar with all sorts of fakes and liars, liberals, false humanists and phoney "revolutionaries" who don't come through in practice. In a dictatorship of the proletariat our members must be among and serve the people in all the areas of endeavor created by the social division of labor: taking part in administrative, military and educational institutions, of course, but most of all working, organizing, teaching and learning among the people. In building towards revolution, the bulk and main strength of the Party must be its shop, farm, student and community clubs. The Party must encourage and solicit the criticisms and suggestions of the people. Its work and policies must be determined by the principle "from the people, to the people," that is, learn the people's needs, ideas and experiences, then synthesize these into coherent principles, methods and policies, and call upon the people and their organizations to put them into practice in the struggle.

Neither a revolution nor this relationship between the Party and the people will happen spontaneously. Any good relationship has to be worked at and built. Serving the people and helping them understand and organize to fight cannot be postponed until the revolution somehow arrives on its own, untouched by human hands. PL members in trade union work are beginning now to build the kind of organization and ties with the people that will make revolutionary struggle and victory possible, and lay the basis for a healthy society.

In virtually every plant in the country, the enemies of the workers are the boss, the government, and, if there is a union, the corrupt,

bureaucratic union officials. The boss provides busy conditions and pay; in times of struggle, the government steps in to help him (injunctions, mediation, cooling-off periods, guide-lines, troops when "needed" etc.); and the words "sweetheart contract" and "sell-out union leader" have become common expressions in this country because they are so common.

There are a few possible ways to work in this situation. One is to leave the people alone--wait until the objective conditions deteriorate--"the people can't understand what we have to say and will hate us for saying it until they are starving and see that capitalism is no good." What that means is (1) We who do understand are superminds; (2) That the people are going to figure out what communism is and decide they want it all on their own (unlike any of the superminds); (3) That the people don't need to be organized to overthrow the bourgeoisie--spirit and right will conquer spontaneously; (4) That we revolutionaries don't need to work, struggle and learn from the people. Enough said of this "theory".

Another possibility is to hide your political views, fight hard on trade union issues (grievances, wages, etc.), get elected to various union positions and hope that when, years later, you tell the workers that you are a communist, they'll accept it and follow you to the revolution. This route has several faults: (1) You may never tell people about your politics because the time may never be right because there's been nothing done to counter anti-communism. (2) The boss may tell them first--supplying his own interpretation of what a communist is. (3) Since you've never explained the relationship between trade union problems and the need for a different system, that is, why you are a red, why they should unite with and even become reds, they probably won't understand it. You are not preparing them for ruling class escalation of tactics as the struggles become sharper--you are leading them just so far and then leaving them to be smashed. Such "pure and simple" trade unionism doesn't raise socialist consciousness and lead to revolution.

The only way to fight the boss and win is through united action. PL trade union cadres are helping to form rank and file caucuses in their plants to intensify the struggle against the boss and eventually replace corrupt, sell-out union officials with militant, class-conscious rank and file leadership and control. In these caucuses, militant, class-conscious workers and PL members work together trying to unite all the workers in the plant to fight against the boss (and, when they stand in the way, the government and union "leaders".) In the course of these struggles we try to win people to a clearer class view of the situation (seeing who their friends are, and who their real enemies). This understanding arms the workers for further battles. Of course the caucus itself should represent the needs of all the workers and take the lead in organizing them, not just be another power clique. The rank and file caucus should fight on both national and local issues, linking up individual workers, shops and local unions wherever possible. The caucus has the responsibility of bringing its ideas, both trade union and political, to every worker in the plant; of consciously trying to bring each person to join in the fight; of building ties with other caucuses; of eventually building a union movement that is really controlled by the union members.

As communists we actively work within our caucuses to achieve this goal. As people get to know us and see that we fight hard for all the workers (not just ourselves), that we try to help people with any problems they have, that we have well-thought-out ideas for our fights against the boss, we explain that the reason we can do these things consistently is that we are Marxist-Leninists, members of PL--that membership in PL helps us do these things and therefore helps them. Of course, we talk about what PL stands for, why we want communism, how this system is a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, etc. But we don't just give a weekly lecture on different topics. Our ideas aren't just a lot of words that have nothing to do with real life; they are useful. The better you understand this system the more able you are to fight against it, and every fight you engage in teaches you more. Whenever possible we try to show that the particular problem we are facing at the moment is part and parcel of the whole capitalist system. We don't want people to say "He's a nice guy and a hard fighter but his politics are way out". We want them to make our political views their own. We want to build not only a strong trade union movement, but a political trade union movement. We want our fellow workers to join with us in the fight for socialism and, in fact to join the party.

The fight against the bourgeoisie must take place on many fronts, not just in the shops, but among black and white workers in communities, in schools, among teachers and other "middle class" workers - wherever there's oppression a struggle must be launched against it. The trade union movement, so important because of it's strategic position in production, must unite with all these other movements in a united front against imperialism, the basis, in the long run, of a socialist revolution.

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Boston Area SDS campaign:

# FIGHT THE FARE HIKE!

by Barbara Fristoe, Emily Perkins  
and Joan Harrigan

## BACKGROUND OF THE CAMPAIGN

Late last November, the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) announced that a fare hike was imminent. A proposal was presented by the General Manager of the MBTA, Leo J. Cusick (who raised the fare in New York before he came to Boston) for an additional 10¢ on surface lines. The Advisory Board (made up of the mayors of the cities and towns the MBTA serves) rejected this particular proposal and mandated Cusick to come up with a better one. They suggested 5¢ on all surface and subsurface lines, which in terms of revenue would be about the same.

This fare increase would transfer about \$8 million a year from the pockets of working people and students to the MBTA. But what are we paying for? Let's look at the finances of the transit system.

The trains were originally privately owned. The owners of the largest lines, the Boston Elevated Railway and the Bay State Railway, were also real estate developers. They built the lines mainly to increase their own property values. By 1918 these lines were bankrupt; the owners had made huge profits and didn't care what happened to the transit system.

Instead of allowing the bankrupt lines to pass into public hands, a Public Control Act was passed in 1918 which guaranteed annual dividends of 6% to the stockholders, while the lines would be managed by public officials. The owners got their guaranteed profits for 30 years, until 1947 when the State, in the form of the Metropolitan Transit Authority, bought the lines that were bankrupt in 1918. It did this by floating a bond issue--for \$20 million. The MTA also took over the \$50 million debt of the transit system, bringing the total debt of the people of Boston (not the former owners of the lines) to the banks up to \$70 million.

In 1949, the MTA borrowed another \$40 million to buy the city-owned subways of Boston. For the privilege of transferring the accounts of the "public-owned" subway from one "public" agency to another, the people of Boston were and are paying \$1 million per year in interest to the banks that lent the money.

Between 1947 and 1961, the MTA doubled the fares on both subways and buses, took away transfer privileges, cut the work force from 8,500 to 5,850 employees and managed to increase the debt to \$140 million. Last year the MBTA (modern enlarged version of the MTA) spent

\$8.6 million on debt payments. \$4.2 million of this was interest alone - pure profit - to the banks and rich bondholders. In other words, not only do working people and students pay the rich for their "public transportation", but they pay twice.

In addition to the debt, the MBTA runs a yearly deficit - which this year amounted to about \$30 million. This deficit is covered mainly by money raised through property taxes (very high in Boston) in the 79 MBTA towns and cities. About 1/2 of the money collected in property taxes comes from small homeowners (partly because big businesses, unless they are let out of paying real estate taxes as is the Prudential Center, are generally assessed at 1/2 or even less of their market value). This means that if the fare was raised and therefore the property tax was not, a working class family might save \$20-30 a year. But if they depend for transportation on the MBTA, the fare hike could cost them an extra \$100 or more. Large businesses and real estate developers, on the other hand, would save a fortune on their property taxes - thereby putting even more of the burden on working people.

### THE CAMPAIGN

A group of students from the PLP and SDS decided that this massive swindle of the people of Boston should be exposed and fought. Since December, students from 11 campuses in the Boston area have been distributing leaflets, talking to riders and drivers and gathering signatures on a petition which reads:

To: The MBTA Board of Managers; The Governments of the 79  
MBTA Cities and Towns; and the State Legislature.  
OUR FARES ARE ALREADY TOO HIGH.  
PAST PROFITEERING AND PRESENT DEFICIT FINANCING RESULT IN A  
\$150 MILLION MBTA DEBT WHICH TAKES MONEY FROM WORKING PEOPLE  
AND GIVES IT TO THE RICH.  
TRANSIT FACILITIES ARE INADEQUATE.  
TRANSIT WORKERS ARE OVERWORKED AND UNDERPAID.

Therefore

### WE DEMAND

1. No fare increase.
2. Better wages and working conditions for transit workers.
3. Improve transit facilities.
4. End the MBTA debt--pay transit costs by taxing the big companies.

We started out by leafletting the transit workers to explain the campaign, for the MBTA and the city have tried to blame the fare hike on "featherbedding" practices of the transit workers' union. We wanted to explain that we were for no fare increase and better wages and working conditions for transit workers; that the money to pay for the MBTA should come from the banks, big companies, real estate developers, etc. who have made and are making millions from the transit system which delivers workers and customers to their doors free of charge.

The response from the drivers was very encouraging. One driver

was so enthused about the campaign that he put a leaflet on every seat of his bus. We had several long talks with the drivers and found that one of their biggest grievances is workingsplit shifts: many of them have to wait around 4 hours without pay between working rush hours.

Over Christmas vacation we handed out 4,000 trial leaflets to passengers at bus stops in working class neighborhoods. Because we were students, most people figured it was another anti-war leaflet, so we had to say "It's against the fare hike." Almost everyone took them. On the basis of the response we got, we revised the leaflet and 200,000 were printed. The leaflets have a cartoon showing a banker and an MBTA boss holding up a transit rider. The text explains how the State set up MBTA deficit financing to funnel millions of dollars from the pockets of working people and students into the pockets of bankers.

The people have given us a lot of support in the campaign. We have received over 1000 signatures in the mail alone and many friendly letters. At least three-quarters of the people we approach, sign the petition. They are very surprised to see us.

People tell us their specific grievances - like spending 2 1/2 hours and \$1.20 a day to get to and from work. Or like the time in January when two trains collided because of frozen brakes and the passengers who weren't hurt were charged an extra dime for the bus that took them to their destination! One woman who operates a subway newsstand, after reading and signing the petition, told the leafletter "You don't know how to do it; you don't have enough nerve!" She then helped out by very forcefully asking everyone who came by the stand why they hadn't signed it yet. She got a lot of signatures, and has remained very friendly to us. Another news vendor on the street helped by putting a leaflet inside every paper he sold. We are often thrown out by the starters (supervisors) or cops. No other employees (drivers, sweepers, etc.) have ever been hostile. Several times they have warned us to stay away from certain areas where we would be seen. Many people take extra leaflets to show to their friends and hand up on bulletin boards at work; and we have gotten many of these back in the mail.

#### IDEAS BEHIND THE CAMPAIGN

The campaign against the fare hike grew out of the concept of the worker-student alliance, that is that workers and students need to unite and struggle against the concrete ways imperialism oppresses both of us. Through working together and fighting against a common enemy in one instance, e.g. the MBTA directors and the profit-making banks, both groups should come to understand that they have mutual interests and a mutual need to ally to achieve those interests.

We are fighting to rid this society of all the aspects of imperialist exploitation and oppression. The sharpest struggle against imperialism today is the Vietnamese people's struggle for national liberation. But even should some U.S. government "leader" negotiate a deal in Vietnam and temporarily end the fighting there, U.S. troops would still be fighting in Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia; struggles against imperialism would continue and be mounted in other areas of Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Black people here would still face massive unemployment, poverty wages, miserable housing and the guns of

the government in summer and winter. American workers would still have to struggle against the speed-ups, layoffs, harrassment on the job, and all the other ways (like the fare hike) that the boss finds to increase profits for himself by squeezing the workers harder. A movement which understands and fights against imperialism in all its aspects cannot be led down McCarthy's - or someone else's - primrose blind alley. Such a movement must include both students and workers.

The campaign against the fare hike is a beginning step in the process of building a worker-student alliance in Boston. In bringing workers and students together around a common problem we begin to overcome some of the many barriers that now divide us and prevent us from struggling together: the conception the ruling class has foisted on students that workers are lazy, stupid, bought-off and reactionary; and the workers' suspicion of students, which stems from the bourgeois media's efforts to paint us as frenzied crazies and manipulation artists willing to use others for our own selfish ends.

In working together, students are learning that workers are class-conscious. One of the demands on the petition is "End the MBTA debt-- pay transit costs by taxing the big companies." Very few workers disagree with this, for they know they are exploited by big business (this contrasts sharply with the many arguments we have on this point with students--including some SDS people). It is our job to expand and develop this understanding, and to suggest strategies and tactics which will allow the people to win--for one of the biggest obstacles is that people think they can't win, or else that they might win only by pressuring some politician or other. Some workers on the other hand are learning that since the student movement is fighting in their interests, at least some of the stuff said in the press about us must be lies.

The worker-student alliance on this level, if it accomplishes these ends, lays some of the groundwork for future anti-imperialist struggle by workers and students on a higher level. And this groundwork has to be laid--for no matter how thoroughly we "understand" imperialism, we cannot beat it as long as the needed goods are produced, assembled, packaged and transported, and as long as working class youths who are the vast majority of those drafted and fighting in Vietnam, continue to see the student movement as an agency to protect students' privileges.

It is becoming clearer and clearer that a worker-student alliance is not only necessary, but possible. It is getting very obvious to many students, and many workers too, that the U.S. government is not "their" government. The strength of the Vietnamese revolution has forced the government to send thousands of young men to die in Asia and to blatantly lie to the people about why, and how successful, the war. Vietnam war-induced inflation has already reduced the real wages of the average worker, while taxes and profits reach new heights. The government's cry for "labor peace" in the false name of the "national interest" undermines striking workers' efforts to reverse the pattern of declining wages and worsening working conditions. The possibility of wage controls and anti-strike legislation are real and immediate threats.

In a fuller sense, it is against the interest of American workers to help the ruling class try to crush the Vietnamese revolution. The concept of working-class unity--across race lines, across national lines--is an old idea but truer now than ever. In siding with U.S. capitalists the workers would not only legitimize the government's right to crush strikes in the "national interest"--they would also be helping them protect and extend their control of the cheap labor and resources of the oppressed countries. As long as the boss can move his factory to Taiwan and pay his workers pennies an hour, he holds a club over the workers at home struggling for higher pay and better working conditions.

We do not pose the worker-student alliance as a substitute for revolutionary organizing within the working class; a revolutionary working class movement cannot be built by students. But projects like the anti-fare hike campaign do have an effect on working people - especially on how workers view radicals. And the most important result of such projects is their effect on the movement itself, towards giving radicals an anti-imperialist and pro-working class outlook.

#### GOALS OF THE CAMPAIGN

1. Prevent the MBTA from raising the fares. Winning this campaign would not only materially benefit the people of Boston, but it would help to overcome their cynicism, the attitude that "You can't fight City Hall. They're going to raise the fares and there's nothing we can do about it."

2. Expose the class character of public transportation: that in a legal and systematic way it serves the interests of banks and big businesses at the direct expense of working people and students. It is not simply a matter of corruption.

3. Unite workers and students against this common enemy. Show workers that student radicals fight for people, not against them; and show radical students that workers are class-conscious and open to radical ideas when they see that these ideas mean something good in practice. Begin, in other words, to develop a working-class perspective in the movement. Without this perspective our "anti-imperialism" is meaningless.

4. Strengthen SDS in the area by reaching students who have never before participated in SDS projects.

#### WHAT NOW?

It looks like the Board of Directors will propose a fare hike very soon. We have been going regularly to their open meetings, and will certainly be there to oppose their plan. If they pass it anyway, it goes to the Advisory Board (of which Mayor Kevin White is the most important member) for approval. Before it goes to them, and possibly even before the Directors formally propose it, we plan to march through working-class areas to City Hall and demand that White vote against the plan. His refusal to do so will make his real relationship to the people very plain.

If the timing works out all right we will have this march on April 20 as part of the SDS 10 Days, because we want to be very much identified with SDS. During the 10 Days, SDS's anti-war activities will be widely publicized. Our march will help to raise the question in people's minds of why the same students oppose the war as oppose the fare hike. People who think the anti-fare hike campaign is good may more carefully consider what we are saying in the on and off campus demonstrations against the war.

The great success of our march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade gives us confidence that the April 20 march will be well received in the community. Marching the four miles of the parade, we distributed about 15,000 leaflets in less than four hours. We were greeted with many words of support and encouragement. One young fellow in South Boston was so excited when he saw us in the parade that he canvassed his whole block returning to us 181 signatures on our petition! The parade probably marked the first time an SDS banner had been unfurled and carried throughout South Boston. We don't think it will be the last!

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GET IN TOUCH

This is the fifth issue of the PL Boston News. Send us your comments and criticisms. We welcome articles and letters that are relevant to people's struggles for a better life.

--- Editors

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## Are Workers Bought Off and Reactionary?

--Auto Workers Strike GM Plant in Framingham--

by Steve Rosenthal

On Monday, March 4, over 3000 workers at General Motors' Fisher Body and Chevrolet Assembly plants in Framingham (twenty minutes drive west of Waltham) walked out on strike. They had been working without a contract since last September, when the previous contract ended.

On Tuesday morning, the second day of the strike, two of us from Brandeis SDS drove out to Framingham and spent about an hour and one-half talking to about a dozen workers on the picket line. What we learned sharply contradicts a lot of widely held myths about American workers.

The first thing the workers told us was that they didn't expect to be on strike very long and that they didn't expect to win very much. They explained that one local couldn't hope to fight General Motors very successfully. "What we should have done," one worker said, "was to go out on strike all over the country against all three companies (GM, Ford, and Chrysler) last fall as soon as the contract ended. That's the only way we have the power to win what we need."

The Reuther leadership of the United Auto Workers had of course not done this. First Reuther picked Ford, conducted a short strike, settled, and soon afterwards, he settled with Chrysler and then with GM. The workers in Framingham were thus striking after the national contract had been settled. We asked them what they thought of the national settlement.

"It looks like Reuther and the companies are working together to sell us out," one guy

said bluntly. "At this local we voted overwhelmingly against the national contract." We asked why they thought the national contract was no good. They explained that the wage increases they got would barely keep up with inflation and higher taxes; that the razzle-dazzle about a "guaranteed annual wage" was actually a gimmick which left them with less unemployment payment during the very frequent layoffs than they got before; that the demand for equal wages for Canadian workers had been dropped; that subcontracting out to non-union shops had not been attacked, and, most of all, that local issues had been ignored as usual. These local issues, it seems, are in fact one of the biggest national issues of all. They consist of speed-up of the assembly line, harassment, arbitrary layoffs and suspensions, lousy working conditions, and refusal to process hundreds of grievances. In short, the company is able on the local level to undercut any gains the workers get in the national contract.

This information fit in with some things we had read in the newspapers over the past few weeks. Reuther apparently had a hard time jamming the contract settlement through this time. Over one-third of the workers voted against it. Dozens of locals went out on unauthorized wildcat strikes both before and after the previous contract ran out. Mass pickets appeared at union headquarters in Detroit to protest the settlement when it was announced. Reuther had ousted the local leadership at several places where outright rebellions had occurred and replaced them with men sent down from the international. A lot

of sharp struggle was obviously going on.

In spite of this opposition, however, Reuther was able to get the national contract through, and locals like the one at Framingham were left to themselves to fight over local issues. On top of this, one worker told us, the retroactive wage increases going back to last September when the previous contract ran out were being withheld from the workers until they settled the local issues. This meant, he said, that the company was collecting interest in this money and that it was being held over the heads of the workers to force them to settle.

The news media's claims that affluent auto workers were out for an extravagantly larger slice of the pie are no more than an outright lie. The average wage at Framingham, the workers told us, is about \$3.40 an hour, which means a weekly pay check of about \$115 after taxes. These auto workers are among the highest paid workers in the country, and still they are having a very hard time and are being sold out by the union leadership. They are not fighting back so militantly out of greed but out of necessity.

Toward the end of our discussion, one worker asked us what we thought of the coming Presidential elections. He said that most of the guys were disgusted with Johnson and wanted the war over with. He guessed we had to stick by our commitment in Vietnam, even though he was quick to say that he thought we should never have gone in there in the first place. When we pointed out that he didn't back up Reuther's commitment to sell him out to the company and that the Government's commitment in Vietnam looked like the same thing, he agreed with us.

The myth that American workers

are bought off and reactionary can be dispelled by even the briefest attempt to talk to them about their jobs, their problems, and the war. Workers in fact do bear the heaviest burdens of the Vietnam war and are really getting fed up with it. Workers also have the power that students don't to get the U.S. out of Vietnam, because they do all the work that makes the war machine and the economic go. Students must develop a long-range strategy of allying with workers in order to force the Government out of Vietnam and to change America.

(See articles in PL magazine on UAW for more information.)

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