

PEACE NEWSLETTER

Published for and by the Syracuse Peace Council
Alan B. Peabody, Editor \$1.00 per year

SFC 623
January 23, 1968

You are invited to the
32nd Annual Birthday Party of
Syracuse Peace Council
6:15, Tuesday, January 30, 1968
First Presbyterian Parish Hall
Speaker: Ross Flanagan
Dinner \$2:00



THIRD Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddhist Monk, Poet, and exiled leader of a
FORCE Third Force in South Vietnam, expressed the anguish of his
people and appealed to the consciences of the American people
to bring to an end the sufferings and destruction in that country.

Thich Nhat Hanh sees three struggles going on simultaneously in South Vietnam. The first is a struggle between Communism and anti-Communism. This is not the most important aspect of the war. It involves only a minority of the people. The masses of the people know nothing of ideologies. They are interested in staying alive, being at peace, and finding independence. Indeed, they have striven for independence from the French and Japanese, and now from the Americans.

There is a second struggle, that for national independence. The National Liberation Front is made up mainly of non-Communist people. To be sure, there are Communist elements, especially in the leadership. However, the NLF claims to fight for national independence and not for Communism. The Anti-Communist elements in South Vietnam also claim to be seeking national independence but have largely failed. It is the NLF which has been able to virtually monopolize nationalism.

There is a third struggle, the international contest between the great powers. The great powers especially the U.S.A. and China, are "fighting out their fears of each other" in Vietnam. Both believe they are helping the Vietnamese people. In reality, the Vietnamese people

have become the victims of that struggle.

The U.S.A. has been surrounding China with military bases, creating a certain kind of mental attitude in China. The U.S. fear is based more on imagination than reality. It is argued that if the U.S. doesn't fight in Vietnam, it will have to fight later in California. Thus the sufferings of the Vietnamese people are largely the result of the fears the great powers have of each other. Thich Nhat Hanh referred to the long experience Vietnam has had as a neighbor of China, and feels that the Vietnamese better understand China than do the Americans. He suggested that a long peace for the world means getting rid of fear. Caricatures of China as a monster are extremely dangerous. What China will become in the future depends on the way the United States deals with China. China may become a monster--because the United States treats it as a monster.

The National Liberation Front has grown because of U.S. policy. Washington has to be firm and to control everything. This violates the right of the Vietnamese to make decisions for themselves. Moreover, U.S. soldiers know little of Vietnamese culture, and they can not distinguish guerrillas from peasants. All this helps the NLF appear to fight for National Self-determination.

Because of the suppression of political opposition by the Saigon regime, only the religious leaders are left to provide a viable alternative to both the Saigon regime and National Liberation Front. Buddhist and Roman Catholic leaders in the bombed rural villages, for example, must provide action to remove the sufferings of their people. The priests--Buddhist and Roman Catholic alike--know that their followers are inclined to join the NLF. But the religious leaders do not want their people to align themselves with a movement in which there are Communists. On the other hand, the religious leaders cannot urge their followers to support Saigon and Washington. They want to stop foreign intervention and keep the country non-Communist.

Between the two extremes there must be a Third Way. Presently the competition appears to be between the NLF and Saigon regime. But the objective should be the formation of a coalition government representing the NLF, the adherants of the Saigon regime, and the elements led by the religious leaders. Such a coalition government would ask the U.S. to stop the bombing and military operations without demanding its immediate withdrawal. Ending the military operations would produce in the Vietnamese population a sense of relief.

Such a government will be supported by the peasants and non-Communist elements in the National Liberation Front, and by others. Presently, for

example, the South Vietnamese army doesn't fight because it has no good cause to fight for. "It will become a factor for peace if it has a government to serve. The NLF will be forced to cooperate, for if it keeps on fighting it will lose popular support, and it will prove that it fights for something other than the self-determination of South Vietnam.

In a moving statement, Thich Nhat Hanh said both Communism and Anti-Communism are producing the suffering of the Vietnamese people. Yet both want to save us. Communism wants to save us from Imperialism, and Anti-Communism wants to save us from Communism. "We need to be saved from salvation."

Both sides can save face. "We have suffered so much we know peace can not be established by the victory of either side." The Front can not be crushed. The Socialist bloc of nations can't let the NLF lose. But the NLF can't push the United States out, and the U.S. can't afford a defeat. One possibility is that Vietnam might be wiped out.

What Washington will do depends on the American people. The policy of Washington is a consequence of the way of thinking prevailing in the United States, one that says Communism is the greatest evil in the world.

At the practical level, Washington wants to talk to Hanoi only, assuming that if Hanoi leaves the NLF alone, the U.S. and Saigon forces can liquidate the front. But Hanoi can not do that, for its prestige will fall. The NLF must be recognized, but the Vietnamese must be allowed to arrange things themselves. The U.S. must abandon the idea of maintaining military bases in the South after the war is over.

Those who wish a fuller treatment of Thich Nhat Hanh's thoughts on the tragedy of his country will want to consult his book "Vietnam, Lotus in a Sea of Fire."

ANOTHER
POSSIBILITY "It is not generally known...but General Dayan has made an interesting offer to President Johnson. The Israeli army, now unemployed, will fight the Vietnam war for us at cost plus ten percent. President Johnson's response is unknown... Secretary McNamara was tempted, and Secretary Rusk was not...but it apparently was negative since we are still plugging away there on our own. We may not be an important military power like Israel, but we have our pride. And let's not lose perspective. The Israelis didn't do it all by themselves: since 1948, the American government has sent Israel \$1,600,000,000 in foreign aid and the American Jewish community has added another \$2,000,000,000. All this in only twenty years. You can

do a lot with three and a half billion dollars. Look at what we're getting for it in Vietnam every month."

Dwight MacDonald, "Politics"
Esquire, September, 1967

DID YOU
SEE THE
IMPLICATIONS?

One of our readers saw, what we did not see, in, of all places, Readers Digest, for December 1967, pp. 75 & 77.

"Nothing in the past experience or imagination of these university-graduated nurses (average age: 28) can pre-condition them against the brutal mutilations of the Vietnam war. "The injuries they handle are unprecedented," says Major General Byron Ludwig Steger, the Army's Chief Surgeon in the Pacific, "because this is a war fought largely with small arms—booby traps, punji sticks, claymore mines, high velocity bullets. Nearly all inflict multiple wounds of the most viciously mutilating kind."

Senior Flight Nurse Major Lola Ball said, "I keep remembering a claymore casualty we flew home. He was just a kid really, and there was nothing much left of him—no arms, no legs, no eyes, just that big heart beating. Each time I checked to see how he was doing he whispered, "Just fine, ma'am, thank you kindly." Sometimes it hurts so much inside you just crawl back to quarters and have a quiet little cry."

A GLOBAL CONFLICT? "Even as American troops attempt to pacify hamlets in Vietnam, special Army teams are now touring scores of our cities, making contingency plans for their pacification next summer."

Richard Nixon, address to the National Association of Manufacturers, New York, December 18, 1967

Office News Help! Does anyone have or know of an adding machine sitting around and not in use? The Syracuse Peace Council office could sure use one!

Also-----Do you know we have an eager volunteer who comes in for a few hours every afternoon and gives of her time and energy? Her name is Debbie Young, a student at Nottingham High School. Abig thank you from all of us to Debbie!

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