

PEACE NEWS LETTER

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POLITICAL UNREST IN S. VIETNAM Ever since Premier Nguyen Cao Ky ousted General Nguyen Chanh Thi from his seat in the government there have been demonstrations and protests by students, Buddhists and Catholics against the military dictatorship in Vietnam. They have been demanding immediate civilian government and elections. On March 29 the students in Hue vowed violent demonstrations if their demands were not met immediately.

At the same time leaders of the powerful Roman Catholic minority have denounced the disorders, but also called for civilian government. They recalled a statement they made in Jan. 1966: "S. Vietnam's political scene is still a lifeless desert, the Government is unable to have a solid legal base, unable to secure wide popular support, the government is still indifferent to the people's life and death problems..." N.Y. Times, 3/30/66

"Even Premier Ky told this reporter that the NLF was closer to the yearnings of the people for social justice and independent life than his own government." -- James Reston, N.Y. Times, 9/1/65.

U.S. CONTROL OF VIET DOMESTIC POLICY "The Johnson administration now is moving quietly, but forcefully, to assume more control over domestic policies and administration of the South Vietnamese government."

This development stems from the Honolulu Conference. "It is a step long urged by some veteran U.S. field workers, whose experience has convinced them that a stable government which responds to civilian desires can never be formed there without U.S. intervention." The U.S. is now running the country and the government as well as the war.

The rural pacification program will be financed by U.S. money and directed by U.S. officials. "Ultimately, success of the pacification program is predicated upon good administration in Saigon, and Johnson's apparent objective is to maneuver Ky into a position where he and his military government will be more responsive to U.S. direction, like it or not." (Douglas Kiker in the Chicago Sun-Times, 3/28/66)

As dissatisfaction with the Ky government increases and more U.S. troops and officials are needed to support and run a crumbling government, defending democracy goes from comedy to farce.

"THE WHOLE THING WAS A LIE!"

(The following quotation is excerpted from an article in Feb. 1966 Ramparts by SPECIAL FORCES HERO V/Sgt. Donald Duncan. He served in the Army for 10 yrs., the Special Forces for 6 yrs. and in Vietnam for 18 mos. While in Vietnam he received the S. Vietnamese Silver Star, the Combat Infantry Badge, the Bronze Star, and the U.S. Army Air Medal. He was nominated for the U.S. Silver Star and was the first enlisted man to be nominated for the Legion of Merit. He participated in many missions behind enemy lines in War Zone D. He was offered a field commission to the rank of captain, but chose to leave Vietnam. He received an honorable discharge on September 9, 1966.)

"I had seen the effect of the bombing at close range. These bombs would land and go for about 15 yards and tear off a lot of foliage from the trees, but that was it. Unless you drop these things in their hip pocket they don't do any good. For 28 hrs. they bombed that area. ... When I came out, it was estimated that they had killed about 250 Viet Cong the first day. They asked me how many V.C. did I think they had killed and I said maybe 6, and I was giving them the benefit of the doubt at that. The bombing had no real military significance.

"One of the first axioms one learns about unconventional warfare is that no insurgent or guerilla movement can endure without the support of the people. While doing research in my job as an Area Specialist, I found that in province after province, the V.C. guerillas had started as small teams. They were now in battalion and regimental strength. Before I left, the V.C. could put troops in the field in division strength in almost any province. Such growth is not only impossible without popular support, it requires an overwhelming mandate.

"We were still being told, by the U.S. and Saigon government, that the vast majority of the people of S. Vietnam were opposed to the V.C. When I questioned this contradiction, I was always told that the people helped the V.C. through fear. Supposedly, the V.C. held the people in the grip of terror by assassination and torture. This argument was also against doctrine. Special forces are taught that reliable support can be gained only through friendship and trust. History denied the 'terror' argument. The people feared and hated the French, and they rose up against them. It became quite obvious that a minority movement could not keep tabs on a hostile majority.

S. Vietnam is a relatively small country, dotted with thousands of small villages. In this very restricted area companies and battalions of V.C. can maneuver and live under the very noses of government troops; but the people don't betray these movements, even though it is a relatively simple thing to pass the word. On the other hand government troop movements are always reported. ... When teaching Special Forces how to set up guerilla warfare in enemy countries, killing unpopular officials is pointed out as one method of gaining friends among the populace. It is recommended that special assassination teams be set up for this purpose.

THE WHOLE THING WAS A LIE. We weren't preserving freedom in S. Vietnam. There was no freedom to preserve. To voice opposition to the government meant jail or death. Neutralism was forbidden and punished. Newspapers that didn't say the right thing were closed down. People are not even free to leave and Vietnam is one of those rare countries that doesn't fill its American visa quota. It's all there to see once the Red film is removed from the eyes. We aren't the freedom fighters. We are the Russian tanks blasting the hopes of an Asian Hungary.

"It's not democracy we brought to Vietnam--it's anti-communism. This is the only choice the people in the village have. This is why most of them have embraced the V.C. and shunned the alternative. The people remember that when they were fighting the French for their national independence it was the U.S. who helped the French. It's the U.S. anti-Communist bombs that kill their children. It's U.S. anti-communism that has supported one dictator after another in Saigon. When anti-communist napalm burns their children it matters little that an anti-communist medic comes later to apply bandages."

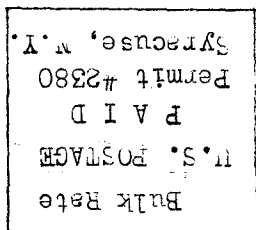
MR. HUMPHREY . . . THE PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW!

(The following is a partial transcript of an interview with vice-president Humphrey. The interviewing group included Special Forces veteran Don Duncan, Robert Scheer (author of "How the U.S. Got Involved in Vietnam" and a Peace Candidate in California) and Univ. of Calif. Mathematics Professor Morris Hirsch. The interview was held on Dec. 4, 1965).

- Q. 1. Is the U.S. willing to negotiate with the N.L.F.?
2. Does the U.S. favor free elections in which the N.L.F. would participate and would these elections be recognized if the N.L.F. won?
- A. "The Administration's policy has long been one of self-determination and free elections in Vietnam; the winner is of no concern to us. If and when there is peace, elections will be held."

- Q. Would the elections be recognized if the N.L.F. won?
- A. "The Communists could never win a free election. Do you have any other questions gentlemen?"
- Q. Mr. Humphrey, if the N.L.F. did win, however, would we abide by the results?
- A. "The U.S. Government does not engage in 'ifs.' Do you have any other questions?"
- Q. Do you favor free elections in which the N.L.F. could participate?
- A. "The Viet Cong is not a legitimate political force; it is an illegitimate, subversive, terroristic organization, supplied, directed and controlled by a foreign government."
- Q. Would the U.S. allow the N.L.F. to participate in free elections?
- A. "The Viet Cong is not a legitimate political party; elections are for people not terrorist groups. We would like to see elections held under the auspices of the UN or some other non-partisan organization."
- Q. According to Article 14 of the Geneva Accords, democratic liberties of all persons and organizations are to be upheld. Is not the N.L.F. a political organization?
- A. "We believe in the freedom of political parties, but there is a difference between peaceful and terroristic, subversive parties."
- Q. Why has there not been a clear statement made regarding the U.S. willingness to negotiate with the N.L.F.?
- A. "We will negotiate with the N. Vietnamese and whomever they bring in. The U.S. negotiates only with governments, not with a band of wandering minstrels."
- Q. But a peace was negotiated with the Viet Minh in 1954 and the Pathet Lao in 1962, and neither group was a government."
- A. "The N.L.F. is not recognized as a government."

- from Ramparts, Feb. 1966



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