

# VIET NAM

SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN



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A reading of the British press during the last few weeks would leave one with the strong impression that three fronts had now been opened in the Vietnam war. And the excesses of hysteria would lead one to the conclusion that the largest, the most violent and the most dangerous was in this country. Yet, amongst all the xenophobic horror - "Tariq Ali Go Home" headlined the London Evening News - came numerous sane and calm voices of support for March 17th. The most ingenious came from Graham Greene in two well-timed letters to The Times. The first linked Grosvenor Square and Warsaw, argued the necessity at times for force to be deployed to confront an unmoving yet hated structure, and surely it is better if that violence is planned in advance. He closed with a quote from a Warsaw paper condemning the Polish students. Five days later he sent a second letter to The Times; he was confused by Tory, Liberal and Labour condemnations of student violence, and made a mistake in his last letter. "The quotation I attributed to a Communist paper attacking the riots in Warsaw was in fact drawn from a Daily Telegraph leader attacking the riots in Grosvenor Square. Please forgive me. I am sure you are as confused as I am." Brilliant and effective.

A second particularly eloquent voice was that of O.H. Parsons, also in a letter to The Times. For him, everyone has gone crazy in reactions against March 17th. Surely, he asked, "British labour, trade union, democratic working class history is one long record of street demonstrations and general uproar. ... The whole history of the fight for British freedom is littered with de-helmeted policemen and batoned demonstrators."

Through all the questions, all the distortions that coloured the press coverage of March 17th, the War continued, though less fully reported. For the press here it is going through a less interesting phase; that of NLF consolidation and U.S. efforts to retrieve some of the position lost in the Tet offensive. But as Gavin Young reported in the Observer, "Vietcong winning the other war", the battle for hearts and minds. Johnson has lost that war. "Once it sounded a fair proposition over a dry martini in a Government villa in Saigon. Perhaps there was even a flicker of hope for it a year or two ago. But not now." "In the Delta, as elsewhere in Vietnam, the Vietcong have the initiative almost everywhere." To Young, it was certain that the image of the Saigon regime had been destroyed beyond repair. "It is one thing, and not pleasant, to have your house destroyed by the Army if the Vietcong occupy it. It is another to have it looted by the Army even if the Vietcong are not in it."

It is in Saigon that the new disillusion with the Thieu regime is especially significant."As you talk in halting translation to the families (in Saigon refugee centres),as you gradually pierce their reserve...you hit a great wave of hatred.But it is not for the Vietcong -they barely seem to acknowledge their existence." wrote Harold Jackson."It is for the Americans,whose rockets they say destroyed their homes.It is for the Government,inextricably associated with the Americans.And it is for the army,which has its own refugee families housed in another part of the school and which gives them so much better supplies than the civilians get." Mark Frankland saw the most likely result of the methods being adopted to cope with the housing problem,in what is already the city with the highest population density of any city in the world,as being "the construction of little better than shanty towns."

In fact,Fred Emery concluded in the Sunday Times,the placards in Saigon proclaiming "Who burnt homes?Who killed the people?The Viet Cong!"are just not accepted by the population.Maybe it was the cyclo-drivers.Most of those 14,000 Saigon workers are off the streets;it is said,according to Observer,that many of them were really Vietcong in disguise (sic),and the Saigon security forces are taking no chances.

Meanwhile,in an episode that Freud could surely have made much of,LBJ unveiled the new C-5A Galaxy -the biggest plane in the world, for cargo use in Vietnam.It is 82 yards long.If used for tourists it would carry 844.Maybe they could use it to clear Vietnam of people?And F111A is introduced into Vietnam. To no-ones surprise.The real surprise will be for the Americans in Khe Sanh,if in fact their camp is not undermined with enemy tunnels."No matter how stupid anything is ... we use it.If some country hills says he has a gadget that he used to hunt foxes with,and wants to try to find tunnels,I say go ahead.I try anything."said the Khe Sanh base commander.A far cry from F111As.

Finally,the third of the fronts that I referred to,that which it seems has appar antly just been opened in the USA.The real front there has,of course, been open some time -it contains draft resisters, the black power movement, and the Dow protesters.It doesn't contain disillusioned idealists or White House aspiring opportunists.Everyone will end the war;Nixon,Kennedy,McCarthy, even Rockefeller,and he isn't even running.But,to the British press,politics is what politicians do,and this is a new front in the war.Sometimes they do valuable things;there could be few clearer exposes of the US position than Senator Church's clear destruction of the US justification of the war,confronting Rusk with his own information in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

But watch young Kennedy;he's going places.

THE 'PUNCH UP'  
or The Pattern of Protest

V.S.C. has been subjected to a great deal of criticism, in the press and from organisations who have "come along with us," about the militancy of Sunday's demonstrations. On the issue of Vietnam it is obvious that all other protest channels have reached an impasse, since enormous numbers of people (particularly the young) have joined our already massive backing. We have, since October 22nd, made it clear that the V.S.C. Ad-hoc Committee is an umbrella movement, covering all shades of opinion and protest. Nobody is compelled or expected to support militancy - all that is necessary if violence breaks out is for those who disapprove to retire from the scene !

Let us face the fact that what happened on Sunday is part of a well-known pattern of protest. The Suffragettes were finally provoked into violent action due to utter cynicism and the disregard of their peaceful protests. When a member of the House of Lords asked one of the peaceful demonstrators, "Do you agree with the violent behaviour of your friends?" he received the reply, "When we spoke softly you did not hear us." The people of Eire found that notice was taken of their complaints and demands when they raided the stock of the N. Irish farmers. The militancy of Sunday's demonstration was - as the Morning Star said in its leader on Monday - due to the fact that "Mr. Wilson's refusal to dissociate from President Johnson's war is rousing people to fury."

We have recently seen a demonstration of about 300 women against the war in Vietnam. This was described as "quiet and impressive" and was even "enjoyed by the police." Aren't these women aware that hundreds of us in V.S.C. and similar protest organisations have been doing this sort of thing for years in an endeavour to reverse the general world trend towards widespread war, and against immoralities like Vietnam. Our marches and demonstrations did produce some results, but the degree of indifference on the part of the rest of the population has enabled this Government to go ahead and back American aggression in Vietnam.

The people who express their disapproval of militancy to the B.B.C. and the press (and the attitude of the press generally) are largely those who are afraid, and have opted for "respectability and conformity" in a world which is underneath terrifying to them. They want more and more "law and order" to bolster up a civilization which is based on exploitation and genocide and is cracking before their eyes. Writers, artists and politicians who would prefer to express their criticisms of injustice in reasoned argument and illustration are compelled to use other methods. Pages of Swift and Luther are quite unprintable even now because they were forced to shatter the easy, lying language of the day into the basis earthy vulgar idiom of ordinary people in order to show up the emptiness and insanity of their time. Wilkes (the darling of the masses - hundreds followed his coach when he was brought to the court) was eventually found guilty of libel after

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describing the King's speech as 'false'. When told by the Judge "I fear, Mr. Wilkes, that you will die either of the pox or on the gallows", replied, "That will depend, your Lordship, on whether I embrace your mistress or your politics." Yet his actions caused the collapse of the much-abused general warrant and gave the press entry to Parliamentary debates. Lenny Bruce, in his nightclub acts, when he criticised our subsidized mealy-mouthism that passes as wisdom, and urged people to move towards sanity and compassion, used this same method. He was, of course, hounded to his death.

Most of our young people are disgusted with the world they have inherited, and since they are intelligent and can see its vast potential for the good of mankind, are not concerned about the disapproval of unscrupulous, unintelligent or fearful members of the public. If this Government continues to refuse to dissociate itself from the immorality and utter cruelty of the American presence in Vietnam, then this will continue to be a rallying point for every kind of protest. The Americans have now threatened the use of nuclear weapons: hence the militancy of the demonstration.

Marjorie Holt.

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MARCH 17th -An important footnote.

It is not necessary to dwell at any length on the question of police behaviour on March 17th, Anyone who was there must have seen countless instances of the police assaulting demonstrators, often in a most brutal fashion. Photographers, whether amateurs or of the press, appear to have been singled out for exceptionally severe treatment, for the crime of taking pictures of the police at work.

In most cases the victims retired to nurse their wounds in silence. Others were arrested, and charged with assault! Few however have gone so far as to fight against this sort of thing. However we have been asked to appeal for information on the case of Tom Appleby who was separated from the Nottingham contingent with whom we was marching. According to our information he was standing dressed in a blue quilted anorak, on the grass holding a camera in a new leather case when four policeman rushed from the cordon, one shouting "Lets get this one", They then dragged him on his knees behind the cordon to a bus, kicking and punching him on the way. He is about 5'9" dark, and was wearing "sideboards". He was subsequently charged with assault.

We would be pleased to hear from anyone who saw this incident.

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## SUCCESSFULL VSC DEMONSTRATION IN AYR

Approximately 50 pickets greeted the Prime Minister when he arrived at the Dam Park Pavilion, Ayr, on Saturday 23rd March to address a Scottish Labour Party Rally. They carried placards calling for support for the National Liberation Front and demanding that the Labour Party carry out its Conference decisions on Vietnam. A special leaflet was distributed to the delegates. The picket was organised by the Glasgow Branch of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. Later a number of hecklers were ejected from the hall when they raised the issue of Vietnam.

## GLASGOW VCS'S 'VIETNAM WEEK'

Glasgow VSC organised a Vietnam Week from 16th-23rd March. The object was to respond in a constructive fashion to the call of the NLF for activities to commemorate the first anti American demonstration in Saigon on March 19th, 1950. The week was preceded by a period of intensive fly posting during which 500 hand made posters were stuck up prominently along thoroughfares in the city. These called for support for the NLF as well as advertising the various events projected. Attempts to hold open air meetings on three days were all frustrated because of rain as was a poster parade of the town centre on the 23rd. However, during the course of the week 10 000 of the specially produced leaflets were distributed at subway stations, busstops, etc. Monday and Tuesday nights saw film shows held in the Trades Council Club and on Wednesday night a public meeting there was addressed by Laurence Daly, Scottish Secretary of the NUM and Tom Hyslop, Provost of Denny. Each of these events attracted audiences of over forty.

On the Thursday night members of the VSC distributed material at a folk song night at which a member of the Stop-It Committee was performing and Matt McGinn made a statement and sang some songs on our behalf. Saturday saw a demonstration organised belatedly by the BCPV who had earlier rejected our attempts to form an ad hoc committee to run joint activities. The official title of the march was 'Mourn and Act' and it was to consist of silent demonstrators dressed in black preceded by one banner stating that we were mourning for the dead of Vietnam. However, in spite of continuous rain, the character of the 1 000 strong demonstration was somewhat changed by the intervention of VSC supporters. The march was studded with Liberation Front flags and large sections of it chanted solidarity slogans in spite of the attempts of the marshals to suggest that we were breaking the supposed 'united front'.

Perhaps the most encouraging feature of the week is the new support which has been coming in for VSC daily. The Secretary reports her telephone frequently ringing with enquiries and donations to assist the activity have been forthcoming from many quarters. It is clear that the activities in London helped to increase people's determination here - a genuine case of 'socialist emulation'. But it is also clear that the longer the war continues the more correct does our political position appear to be. The great success of the Tet offensive was most important in this respect. Increasingly therefore the VSC can be seen as the leading body in the anti-war movement in the west of Scotland.

## THE TASKS BEFORE US.

The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign has now been in existence for nearly two years. During that period, considerable progress has been made in the task of uniting large sections of the left in Britain in a movement of solidarity with the people of Vietnam. Our task has perhaps been made easier by the growing feeling of dis-illusionment with the policies of the Wilson Government, and more so by the gains made by the people of Vietnam themselves in the recent Tet offensive. Nevertheless progress has been impressive by any standards, culminating in the March 17th Demonstration, the size and militancy of which seemed to overshadow even the gold crisis.

This said, it is necessary to set ourselves new tasks in the coming months. Our central aim should be to mobilise ever wider sections of the population, including the organised trade union movement. The principal immediate task is to strengthen the organisation, first of all in preparation for the V.S.C. national conference in May, so that the conference will reflect the growth in support that V.S.C. has experienced in recent months, and secondly in order that the policies adopted by the conference can be effectively carried out.

As things stand we are hard pressed by existing commitments, in spite of our recent financial appeal. The main prop is the income from Bankers orders. However this is not yet adequate to meet the needs of a growing movement.

In this issue of the Bulletin we enclose a Bankers Order form and we ask all our members and supporters to make a serious financial commitment. Bankers Orders have two great advantages. Firstly, they are a relatively painless means of extraction, and secondly they can provide V.S.C. with a stable income. If one hundred of our supporters each gave £1 a month in this way, we would be able to meet our commitments in the next period without serious difficulty.

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## VIETNAM, UNITED STATES & BRITAIN

PRICE 2/6d plus postage from V.S.C. or the Stop It Committee

This is a new pamphlet of great importance for the protest movement in Britain. It analyses in some detail the extent and nature of British complicity. Its subtitle is; "The facts of entanglement". As the authors of the pamphlet themselves state they set out to prove that the prevalent notion that the Vietnam War does not concern Britain is false. They provide important information on materials produced in Britain for the war in Vietnam, and already local vietnam groups are starting to use this knowledge to provide themselves with a local focus of activity. It also lists colleges involved in research for war production.

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## VIETNAM FILMS

Listed below are a number of films on Vietnam available from various sources. The list is far from complete but contains a number of films which will be of most interest to V.S.C. supporters. Any inquiries about these films received by V.S.C. will be forwarded to the appropriate distributor (in most cases either Plato Films or Contemporary films).

THE THREATENING SKY. 28 minutes Produced by Joris Ivens (35 mm. 16mm)

Impressions of life in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the liberated areas of the South. Shows how the people are resisting American aggression. Includes interviews with Ho Chi Minh, Pham Van Dong, and Nguyen Huu Tho.

WESTERN EYE WITNESS IN THE NORTH OF VIETNAM. 40 mins Dir. James Cameron.

Concentrates on life in the North rather than the war. Shows their resourcefulness in time of danger. (16mm or 35mm)

FAR FROM VIETNAM. 115 minutes.

A collection of short films made by over 20 film directors. Includes an interview with Fidel Castro.

INSIDE NORTH VIETNAM. by Felix Greene 82 minutes.

Contains a good deal of new material on the war including the air attacks and the capture of a U.S. pilot.

U.S. CRIMES IN VIETNAM 35 minutes English Commentary

ROBERT JACKSON ACCUSES 12 minutes with English commentary.

A German film (G.D.R.) which quotes Robert Jackson, former U.S. prosecutor at Nuremberg against the background of Vietnamese newsreel material.

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A film has been produced of the March 17th Demonstration, and the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign is looking into the possibility of obtaining prints. The film was produced by the film Co-op. group and runs for ninety minutes. If prints are available, details will appear in the Bulletin next month.

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It should be noted that in each case a charge is made for the use of films, and that there are extra charges for delay in returning films.

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Available from the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign...

Literature; Why Vietnam Solidarity? A basic policy

statement by the National Council of V.S.C....price 6d plus  
post.

Vietnam and Trade Unionists.... one shilling  
post extra.

Vietnam Solidarity Bulletin 6d plus post or

10/- for a years subscription.

An important new pamphlet is "Vietnam, United States and Britain.. the facts of entanglement" It is a detailed examination of British complicity. Price 2/6 plus post.

V.S.C. Badges Sixpence each plus post. Reductions for bulk.

Paper Flags On wooden stisks, Approx. 9" x 12".

One shilling each plus postage.

Small paper lapel flags suitable for flag days etc.in support of Medical Aid.

Posters Che Guevara Lives 3/6 each plus post(gold border)

Psycho Circus 3/6 each plus post(originally used to advertise a V.S.C. concert. Portrays Johnson as a clown)  
Also various Cuban posters at 2/- each plus post.

All the above are available from V.S.C. at 8, Toynbee St E.1

In addition some very attractive N.L.F. carrier bags are now available. They sell at 2/- each, and seem to be going well .

For information write to David Wild,

20, Chalcot Rd.

London N.W.1.

01-586-0554.

A small discount is available to local groups, but profits will be sent to Medical Aid.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The National Conference of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign will be held on the weekend of May the 18th and 19th., at the Con ay Hall in London. Fuller details will appear in next months Bulletin, and will be circulated to supporters of the V.S.C.. The Conference will take the form of discussion around papers previously circulated. Subjects will include;

The International protest movement.  
Local activities.  
Future perspectives and the next demonstration.  
Current stage of the War.  
Political and economic complicity.  
Complicity in the field of science.  
V.S.C. and the left in Britain.

Papers are being prepared on the above subjects.

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April 26th Student Strike in the U.S.A.

Most Colleges in Britain will only just have reopened, and this creates problems of organising sympathy actions. However some activities are planned to mark the occasion:-

Sheffield; A Teach-in is planned for Saturday 27th. Full details from Mike McColgan, 97, Harcourt Rd, Sheffield 10.

West Middlesex ( Of special interest to all London supporters)

April 28th 2-30 p.m. March from South Harrow Tube station to the U.S. Air Base at Ruislip.

Details from Keith Veness,  
2, Churchill Court  
Newmarket Ave.  
Northolt; Park Middlesex

Lewisham

April 27th Action at Elliot Automation (makers of Radar for U.S. in Vietnam)

Details from Eltham Peace Action

83, Gregory Crescent,

London S.E.9.