



# **WHY VIETNAM SOLIDARITY?**

**POLICY STATEMENT BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE  
VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN 6d**

## PREFACE

The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign has only been in existence a few months but in that short time it has provoked a wide political discussion. For the first time in the left wing and peace press there has been a discussion as to what attitude the anti-war movement in this country should take to the national liberation struggle. We have received a very wide measure of support and sympathy from many sections of the movement. On the other hand some well-meaning people have felt themselves unable to take a solidarity position because they felt that this meant being in favour of prolonging the war. Others have felt that the only correct moral position to take is that of neutrality. More weighty arguments have come from those who argue that taking a solidarity position narrows the scope of opposition and thus makes it less effective.

The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign is convinced that, on the contrary, all those who oppose the war in Vietnam are morally bound to take a solidarity position. We are convinced, moreover, that this is the most effective way to oppose the war in Vietnam, that the existence of a powerful solidarity movement will stiffen all resistance to the American war of aggression. Having said this we do not dismiss lightly the arguments of those who take a different view. These vital questions will only be resolved by a thorough and detailed discussion. It is to this end that this pamphlet is devoted. We are anxious to learn the opinions of all those who read it. Please send your comments to us. This discussion will be continued in our journal, *The Vietnam Solidarity Bulletin*, which is available from 8, Roland Gardens, London, S.W.7, 9d. post paid, or a year's subscription nine shillings.

## THE BASIS OF THE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign is the only campaign in Britain which seeks to build a united front of organizations and individuals offering full support to the Vietnamese people in their struggle against foreign aggression and domination.

We are a united front of individuals and groups, holding diverse political views and diverse estimates of the world political situation,

but we unite together to declare our solidarity with the Vietnamese people because we judge their struggle to expel the foreign forces of the United States and its allies to be a wholly just struggle deserving our full support. In other words, we base our solidarity with the Vietnamese, and with their organs and organizations of struggle, the National Liberation Front and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, on the unconditional defense of the Vietnamese people's right to self-determination, to choose their own programmes, their own leaders, their own organizations, to pursue their own national destiny, free from foreign intervention and aggression.

Our campaign recognizes its own historical precedents. In the 1930's, united fronts composed of liberals, democrats, communists and socialists, were forged to oppose the onslaught of fascism, and international brigades were organized to lend material support to the heroic struggle of Republican Spain to defeat the fascist intervention. These struggles were joined and supported by people of diverse political views, from parties with diverse political programmes, united only in their opposition to the fascist menace.

The basis on which we seek to organize our united front is even simpler, broader, and more fundamental than the anti-fascist principle of the 1930's. It is defense of the principle of self-determination: defense of a small peasant country against the aggression, intervention and domination of the world's strongest industrial power.

We hold that a just solution to the Vietnamese war is the unconditional withdrawal of the aggressor's forces, the removal of his military bases from Vietnam, and the restoration of Vietnamese sovereignty to the Vietnamese people. *We are ready therefore to support any and only those conditions for peace which are acceptable to the Vietnamese themselves, to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and the National Liberation Front.*

### THE CAMPAIGN'S ATTITUDE TO THE NLF

There are only two groups in South Vietnam claiming to represent the Vietnamese people in a sovereign sense, the National Liberation Front and the Saigon Government (the Government of the State of South Vietnam). The solidarity campaign recognizes the National Liberation Front as the sole legitimate claimant to represent the Vietnamese people, and therefore supports the NLF

and the forces grouped around the NLF in its struggle against U.S. domination. The campaign's attitude is based on the following historical record :

In March 1946, France (the former colonial ruler of Vietnam) officially recognised the existence of an independent Republic of Vietnam under the presidency of Ho Chi Minh, who had won general elections held in January of the same year. The official statement reads : " The Government of France recognises the Republic of Vietnam as a free state having its own government and its parliament, its army and its finances, forming part of the Indo-Chinese federation of the French Union." It soon became apparent, however, that France wanted to retain colonial control of the rich southern province of Vietnam. As a result, fighting broke out between the recently recognised Republic of Vietnam, and the French colonial army.

After three years of fighting to further their attempt to re-establish colonial control, now over the whole of the country, the French, set up a puppet State of Vietnam, headed by Bao Dai, who had been puppet emperor under the Japanese and had formally and voluntarily abdicated when the Republic of Vietnam was established and recognised in 1946. It is this wholly illegitimate foreign imposed puppet state (the terms are literally descriptive) that forms the " legal " basis for all the subsequent Saigon regimes.

By 1954, the French and their puppet regime had lost the war with the Republic of Vietnam. Rather than press the victory to its ultimate conclusion and risk military intervention and possible nuclear bombardment by the U.S., however, the people of Vietnam agreed to negotiate a cessation of hostilities, and to settle the question of representation by an internationally supervised election. This was the essence of the Geneva Agreement. The whole basis of the Geneva Accords was that an election would be held by June 1956, to decide which of the two states of Vietnam was the *legitimate* representative of the Vietnamese people. On the one hand, there was the Republic of Vietnam, headed by Ho Chi Minh, representing a coalition of indigenous nationalist forces, ratified by a general election under universal suffrage, which is generally acknowledged by Western observers to have been indicative of the state of public opinion at the time, and recognised by the French as a free state, representing the Vietnamese in 1946. On the other hand, there was the puppet state headed by Bao Dai, created by a foreign power, supported by a foreign army, and having no legitimate claim to sovereignty in Vietnam.

The elections to decide the issue between the two governments were never held. Instead, another foreign power, the United States,

which had recently paid the full military bill of the French colonial war, engineered its own puppet, Ngo Dinh Diem, into control of the quisling regime, and in violation of its own commitment and the tenets of international law prevented the holding of elections, and thus destroyed the entire basis of the Geneva settlement.

*Nothing that has happened since has changed the fact that the Saigon government is a regime created by a foreign power, in the interests of a foreign power, is maintained by a foreign power, and has no legitimate basis for its claim to represent the Vietnamese people.* The succession of military dictatorships, each acceding to power by *coup d'etat*, each totally dependent on U.S. financial and military support, does not alter but only emphasises this fact. (That many of these regimes were only toppled after they departed from U.S. policy to seek a negotiated settlement of the conflict, only underscores the tragedy of the brutal war that the United States is imposing on the entire people.)

For its part, the National Liberation Front, like the Vietminh before it, is a broadly based coalition drawing wide popular support. The rebellion which it is leading against the Saigon puppet regime is based first on the repression against former Vietminh supporters carried out by the Diem regime in violation of the Geneva accords, and second on the fact that the Diem regime with U.S. support attempted to reverse the land reform carried out by the Vietminh during the war with the French. In personnel and programme, the National Liberation Front is the natural heir to the Vietminh and this combined with its fraternal links to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, that is to the government recognized as the sovereignty in all Vietnam in 1946, confirms the Front's claim to represent the Vietnamese people in their continuing struggle against Japanese, French and U.S. Domination.

#### **THE CAMPAIGN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE EXISTING ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN**

The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign has been organized because no other group in Britain has sought to build a united front of support for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front, based on the principle of self-determination.

The principle of self-determination is a fundamental democratic right which has been fought for by all oppressed people; it is the foundation stone of any just international order, and the most basic legal element in the structure of any stable international peace. Yet, the major existing anti-war organizations in Britain have each consistently compromised this principle with respect to

the war in Vietnam. They have thereby weakened the anti-war struggle, both with respect to Vietnam and in general, and they have as a consequence strengthened the position of the aggressor.

Whereas the main demand now advanced by the American anti-war movement is unconditional withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam, the demand still put forward by British peace organizations is that negotiations between the parties be opened. It is precisely this call to *both* sides to negotiate, however, that compromises the basic principle of self-determination. For to demand that both parties to the conflict stop fighting is to equate the struggle for liberty and self-determination with the criminal actions of the aggressor.

Just as the British refused to negotiate with Hitler in 1940, so the National Liberation Front and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam refuse to negotiate with the United States except on condition that the aggressor withdraw his forces and cease his aggression. The British peace movement has failed to show its solidarity with the victims and their resistance but instead has urged them to be "reasonable" and enter negotiations with the invader. The United States has no right to participate in any negotiations respecting the political destiny of Vietnam; what prerogative it has, it has by ruthless terror and force. To recognize such a prerogative—and each call on the NLF and the DRV to negotiate does just that—is inexcusable and base. Many however, who have taken this position until now, have taken it without realizing its implications. Many, moreover, who have since heard the words "peace" and "negotiations" on the lips of the President of the U.S. as he ordered the escalation of U.S. aggression and its genocidal bombings, many who have heard the words also on the lips of the British Prime Minister as he endorsed these same atrocities, have come to realize the impossibility of effectively opposing aggression by urging the victim to negotiate. Many have come to recognize that to make such an appeal is to step into moral quicksand.

Until now, however, there has been no organized movement into which such people could channel their opposition to the war. It is the purpose of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign to provide such a channel. The campaign recognizes that the war in Vietnam is a war of aggression. It condemns this aggression and supports those who are resisting it.

There is a wider significance to these issues, moreover. For to appease the aggressor by urging him to the conference table to determine the political future of the country which is his victim is to invite him to escalate his aggression (as should by now be perfectly evident). Thailand is virtually an occupied country (and

provides a base for 75 per cent of the bombing of North Vietnam) and Cambodia has already been attacked. Will those who urge negotiations on the Vietnamese now, also urge negotiations on the Thais and Cambodians as they rise to defend their sovereignty and freedom? Would they do so to the Dominicans?

The history of appeasement in the thirties (also through negotiation) provides an awful lesson to those who would deny to small countries full support in their resistance to aggression. We who have joined together to form the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign are persuaded that solidarity with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front now is not only the sole just and moral position to take with respect to this particular war, but that it is the only hope of preserving *world* peace as well.

### JOIN THE VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign brings together representatives of those in Britain who have consistently and energetically combatted successive governments' support of American aggression.

Our President is *Bertrand Russell*; and our Chairman, *Ralph Schoenman*. The members of the National Council include Ken Coates, Chris Farley, Quintin Hoare, David Horowitz, Pat Jordan, Ted Knight, John La Rose, Ian Millar, John Palmer, Ralph Rosenbaum, Jim Scott, Ernie Tate, Tony Topham and Barbara Wilson.

If you wish to support the struggle of the Vietnamese people, your place is in the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. If you are not already a member, fill in the form below and either hand it to the person distributing this leaflet or send it to our office. (Please use block capitals.)

To VIETNAM SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN,

47 Rivington Street, London, E.C.2

I support the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign and wish to become a member.\*

I enclose 10/- subscription for one year.

I would like further information about the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign.\*

Name .....

Address .....

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\* Delete as applicable.