

# TRADE UNIONS AND VIETNAM

THE STORY OF THE FIRST BRITISH TRADE UNION  
DELEGATION TO VIETNAM

(An Eye-witness Account)



FOREWORD BY:

Jack Jones, General Secretary, Transport & General Workers Union

Hugh Scanlon, President, Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers

## FOREWORD

The effect of the horror of the War in Vietnam is graphically described by the British Trade Unionists in this pamphlet. Their visit to North Vietnam co-incided with the eight points peace proposals advanced by the representative of the Provisional Revolutionary Government at the Paris peace talks.

The proposals call for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from that country, in line with our own Trade Union Congress policy, at the same time they seek to create an independent nation able to determine its own future without foreign interference.

The British Trade Union Movement has taken a stand on Vietnam, this pamphlet will help Trade Unionists to understand more clearly how they can assist the people of Vietnam to secure peace, independence and the right to determine their own future.

*Jack Jones, T. & G.W.U. — General Secretary  
Hugh Scanlon, Amalgamated Union of Engineering  
Workers — President.*

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## ORDERS FOR PAMPHLET

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**ONE SHILLING**

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In September 1970, the first ever British trade-union delegation visited North Vietnam. They went at the invitation of the Federation of Trade Unions of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

**WHY THEY WENT** Their purpose was to see at first hand the realities of the situation in North Vietnam; to establish contact with the trade unions there and to be available to give reports to trade union and other interested organisations, on their return to Britain.

**WHO WENT** The Delegation consisted of:

**BILL JONES** — Leader of the delegation, former member of the General Council of the Trade Union Congress

**CLIVE JENKINS** — Representing the Executive Committee of the Association of A.S.T.M.S.

**DAN DUFFY** — President of the Scottish Motormen's Union and representing a group of 9 unions in Scotland.

**KEN GILL** — Representing the Executive of the Draughtsmen & Allied Technicians (D.A.T.A.)

**JOAN MAYNARD** — Representing the British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam. (Joan Maynard is the Vice-President of the National Union of Agricultural & Allied Workers).

**HOW THEY WENT** The visit was arranged by Bill Jones, of the Transport & General Workers' Union, and, at the time, a member of the General Council of the T.U.C., in co-operation with the British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam, and other organisations concerned with the achievement and preservation of peace. Substantial sums of money were donated by trade unions, particularly those which appointed delegates.

## WHERE DO BRITISH TRADE UNIONISTS STAND?

At the "Annual Parliament" of the British Trade Union Movement, the Trade Union Congress, in September 1970, the following resolution was passed:

"This Congress declares itself opposed to any policies that would result in British Military Forces being sent to South Vietnam, Cambodia or South East Asia.

It calls upon the British Government to dissociate itself from the actions of the U.S. Government in South Vietnam and Cambodia and declares that peace is impossible until the withdrawal of U.S. forces takes place"

Moving the resolution at the T.U.C., Harry Urwin, Assistant General Secretary T. & G.W.U. said:—

"The war in Vietnam is a particularly wasteful, costly and cruel war and the trade union movement should exert its fullest influence in bringing it to an end as quickly as possible.

The civilian population of this small country had been subjected to almost continuous warfare for **30 years**. First against the Japanese, then against the French before becoming involved in the present conflict.

## Bombardment

More bombs have fallen on Vietnam than on the whole of Europe and North Africa during the second world war. General Westmoreland as Commander of U.S. Forces in Vietnam said that 'the American bombardment was the heaviest in the history of warfare.'

But the biggest victims of these attacks are civilians, especially children. A report to the Senator Kennedy Sub-Committee on Civilian Casualties, issued on July 1, 1969, states that civilians are being killed or wounded in Vietnam at the rate of 200,000 a year; that 80 per cent of these casualties are caused by American firepower; and that 60 per cent of them are children.

## Refugees

A quarter of the population have been turned into refugees. Half of all children born in South Vietnam don't live to the age of five.

Surely we must demand an end to this terrible war, which, if allowed to continue, could extend throughout South East Asia and threaten to engulf us in a world war.

The United States have now lost more troops in Vietnam than it lost in the first world war. The Vietnamese losses are much higher.

In 1968 the cost in financial terms to the USA was £10,000 millions. How much better to have used this to fight poverty in underdeveloped countries of the world.

This waste of economic resources had led to the neglect of social programmes in America aggravating racial tensions and increasing unemployment.

To the hazards of the war in Vietnam itself is now added the danger that this war will be extended throughout the whole of the Indo-China area — and this could not happen without the most direct effects on us.

## Criticism

The previous British Labour Government was (quite properly in our view) subjected to much criticism for refusing to dissociate itself from American policy in Vietnam — nevertheless, Harold Wilson's Government resolutely refused to involve British Forces in the conflict in spite of the displeasure to the American Administration.

The present Government's South-East Asia policy brings the danger of involvement nearer and must be squarely recognised by the British public.

British troops could soon be fighting in Indo China if the policy is not revised. We have to come out publicly in opposition to what many Tories are saying behind the scenes — that Britain has a financial stake in South East Asia which requires us to bolster the Americans with troops.

Secondly, we are saying what is now quite clear — that no peace is possible in Vietnam without a withdrawal of U.S. troops.

The North Vietnamese will not negotiate an agreement that perpetuates American influence in Vietnam — they will fight on, with all the long-term advantages on their side.

**In the U.S.**

Gradually this fact is being understood in the U.S.

That is why the forces for American withdrawal are growing in strength. Not only students on the campuses but trade unions like the Automobile Workers and millions of liberals and other progressives are now in opposition. The late Walter Reuther, in his very last message to the T.G.W.U. said:

**"We must mobilise for peace rather than for war, in order to turn our resources and the hearts, hands and minds of people to the fulfilment of America's unfinished agenda at home."**

The Automobile Workers in a special message to the TGWU, said:

**"The tragic lesson that must be learned from Vietnam is that democratic solutions to the problems of human communities do not emerge from the barrel of a gun."**

**American people**

The American people do not want war. American soldiers do not want war. They are no braver, nor more cowardly than the rest of us — but the plain fact is a quarter of a million American soldiers have deserted or have been classified absent without leave because of their reluctance to be involved in the hopeless morass of American policy in Vietnam.

We would be foolish to be anti-American. We need their help to solve the terrible problems of poverty throughout the world.

But it will do none of these things unless it gets out of Vietnam.

While it stays it pursues a policy that is economically damaging to itself — and to every member of every union — a policy that disrupts efforts to find world peace anywhere in the world."

At that same conference 400 delegates, all of them elected by their fellow workers to represent them at this most important trade union gathering, personally signed the following message:

*"The undersigned, delegates to the 1970 T.U.C., welcome the forthcoming visit of a British trade union delegation to North Vietnam. We ask them to convey to the Federation of Trade Unions who have invited the delegation, and to the people of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam the declared policy of the T.U.C. for the withdrawal of all foreign troops and a peace settlement based on the Geneva Agreement of 1954, and the sincere wish of British trade unionists for the realisation of these policies."*

## THE DELEGATES REPORT

On their return to this country, the delegates have written about their visit. In the following pages, we print, in their own words, their plain, unvarnished accounts of their visit.

### BILL JONES

Bill Jones asked the question, "How has this small and obviously poor country been able to hold back one of the world's richest and most powerful nations?"

He answers:

"Perhaps they were not so poor. Perhaps we are yet to see some evidence of their economic and technical power.

#### Evidence

We never did see this evidence. What we did see, what we did hear, was a people who were struggling against tremendous odds, who were united behind their Government. A people accepting that the much needed improvement in their living conditions, their social welfare, houses, hospitals and schools which, while improving slowly, have had to give way to the priority of the war effort.

We saw fantastic improvisations. We saw voluntary brigades by the score repairing roads and railways.

We saw crash courses in progress for the urgently required skilled and technical workers at the colleges.

We were impressed with the serious attention being paid to education. In spite of the acute shortages, literacy, which we were told was as low as 10 p.c. under French rule, has been achieved almost completely.

We did not see any riches. We did not see great economic or material power. We saw hard work. We saw determination. We saw confidence. We saw a complete unity of the people.

#### Bombed

Among our many visits was one to the seaside resort of San Son, which had been heavily bombed. On our way there we passed over a road and rail bridge (in English, the Horse Bridge), which has become part of the folklore of Vietnam.

Although it has been bombed on 1,700 occasions and hit many times, the people claim that it has not been out of use for more than two days at any time.

One of our most depressing visits was to the headquarters of the Commission for the Investigation of U.S. War Crimes, which is housed in the former U.S. Embassy in Hanoi. It contained a whole range of indecent, monstrous anti-people bombs devised by the U.S.

#### Barbaric

Two of the most barbaric were one which appeared to be a small piece of torn fabric, some two inches square, which contained a small bomb capable of blowing off an arm or a leg.

The other was a slim piece of steel, the size of a lead pencil refill, fitted with

an arrow head. We were told that this horrible invention of the scientific brains of the U.S. when it exploded, sent out dozens of these steel arrows which, when they penetrated the body, then spun on inside the body, tearing the flesh as they rotated.

#### Foreign Secretary

We had meetings with the leaders of the trade unions, the representatives of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the South, and the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary.

One of our more pleasurable moments in Hanoi was when we handed over to the North Vietnamese Medical Aid a quantity of medical instruments and drugs from the Medical Aid Committee in this country. British trade unionists contribute heavily to this fund.

I can only end this report by saying that, after fourteen days in Hanoi and in North Vietnam, the delegation left with the firm conviction that the people firmly and cheerfully back the Government."

#### CLIVE JENKINS

"Hanoi's view of the late Labour Government's attitude was bitterly critical.

The North Vietnamese were clearly not interested in arguments about British military or economic power but they expressed deep concern at the political support so consistently given by Labour Ministers to 'every turn in White House policy'.

A member of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Workers' Party said to me that 'they were the only major Government behaving like a client state of the Americans.'

The bombing of North Vietnam started on August 4, 1964 and ended on November 5, 1968, so during most of this period a Labour Government was in office. One million tons of bombs fell on the territory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The Vietnamese (including the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam) look back upon this period as one in which all sorts of manoeuvres were carried out by the Wilson administration in order to blunt the criticism of the Left wing of the Labour Party.

The abortive visit of Harold Davies was regarded as even more irritating: 'They tried to send us an ex-Left wing, very junior minister. Who did they think he could talk to?'

The real point of criticism here is that the Prime Minister sought to project his role as that of an honest broker. This met with total incomprehension in North Vietnam in view of his failure to dissociate himself from some of the cruellest bombing the world has ever seen. The Vietnamese opinion

was that this entirely vitiated the possibility of any initiative by the British that might arise from being co-chairman of the Geneva Agreements.

They, and the Russians, saw the position of the other co-chairman in a different light. When I went through Moscow, an authoritative Soviet spokesman confirmed to me: 'We are a major supplier of arms and assistance to the North Vietnamese and we propose to go on doing this until they indicate that we can assist in providing the framework for a political solution. But it is up to them. We will carry out our duties when requested.'

Hoang Tung is the Central Committee Member for Press and Propaganda and editor of the DRV party newspaper. He has studied every one of the House of Commons' debates on Vietnam and said: 'We know that there are personalities in the Commons and the Upper House who have been helpful and sympathetic to us, but the Labour Government's association with America is bound to bring charges of partiality if there is ever a reconvening of the Geneva Conference. We do not ask you to side with us but it ought to be possible for you to be neutral.'

I asked if there were any specific complaints about overt acts of hostility.

Obviously, the persistent use of Hong Kong for rest and relaxation for American servicemen is irritating: 'You have created favourable conditions for the waging of the war against us. This is another reason that it is difficult to consider the Labour Government even as a neutral. It was so very quick in responding to any American Government policy. There are British advisers on pacification in the South who got their experience in Malaya — and others.' It transpired that he was talking about various academics and Labour Members of Parliament who had been on conducted trips under the auspices of the American or South Vietnamese authorities.

The Ambassador and Plenipotentiary of the DRV in Moscow had a similar view and asked how *Time* magazine of August 24 could claim to have based a report, which he derided, about the North's economic position upon a confidential British Government's assessment. This has meant that the Provisional Revolutionary Government, too, has classified Britain among the hostile nations in its consideration of what should be done about foreign capital and holdings in the South when the war is over.

The Acting Head of the Special Representation of the PRG in Moscow (Truong Cong Dong) said that they will propose the nationalisation of American holdings and of the unfriendly nations. He specified the British companies he had in mind. But he went on to display that flexibility of bargaining which is an index of the political maturity of the hardened leaders in a nation at war for 25 years when he said: 'But we would be willing to reconsider if nations change their minds now.'

The present situation in North Vietnam is that they have managed to hold their standard of life at the level it was before the air 'war of destruction' commenced. But they say 'we have had to halt all new construction because of possible bad eventualities.' They are prepared for a resumption of the



bombing on the principle that there could be a last-ditch effort by the Americans to win the war militarily. They are also absolutely confident that the infrastructure of the Saigon Government is rotten. They claim to have securely administered liberated areas not only in the countryside but in the towns themselves — including Saigon.

Tung said: 'We could now forcibly reunite the country'. The Vietnamese could stand a war of attrition and are willing to proceed on a strategy based on a long peoples' war embracing the whole of Indo China. But they do not want to do that.

In 1945 they had an illiteracy rate of 91 per cent and this has been virtually wiped out. Almost 90 per cent of the countryside population suffered from eye diseases. This has been almost eliminated. But the countryside is still being shaped by the water buffalo and the human hand. We saw no mechanised implements in use anywhere in the countryside, but uniquely in South East Asia, there is village medical attention and education throughout the country.

This is the kind of social activity which should have had the clear-cut sympathy of the British Labour Party and its Government. Instead the North Vietnamese saw Michael Stewart's speeches supporting the Americans and Mr. Wilson's seeking of an independent role as complementary halves of a political policy bound to confuse the waverers and obstruct the building up of international pressures to stop the bombing.

They dismiss with contempt the idea that the best way to influence Americans is to be the most loyal of allies, and ask: 'What effect did it have? Can you point to anything?'

They clearly draw a major distinction between the rank and file of the Labour movement and those who they consider have been responsible for obscuring the issues — although they also hint that as socialists, sympathetic to their cause, we could all have done rather more.

The saddest reflection for any member of the British Labour Party must be that the foreign policy of a Labour Government conceivably lengthened one of the unfairest, bitterest and bloodiest wars the world has ever seen."

## KEN GILL

"Down the road from our hotel in Hanoi was a lake with a pagoda in the centre, the Tortoise temple.

The Lake of the Restored Sword commemorates the peasant-king who, pondering on the plight of his country under the yoke of the Chinese dynastic barons, was presented with a magic sword by a tortoise and bidden to rid the land of its invaders.

Having completed the task he went back to the lake and returned the sword thankfully to his reptilian benefactor.

A 12th century legend, but it could have been a modern political morality story combining the readiness to wage war and the desire to end it.

## World Peace

The aim of the North Vietnamese to finish the war is not based merely on ideological commitment to world peace.

The enormous tasks of reconstruction were apparent as soon as we arrived

in Hanoi. Two thousand houses were destroyed during the 'War of Destruction' launched by the Americans after the phoney Gulf of Tonkin incident on August 5, 1965.

Three years of bombing have left their mark, not only in Hanoi, Haiphong and other provincial towns but on the roads, bridges and villages of North Vietnam.

The trials of Vietnam started after the declaration of the Vietnam Republic by Ho Chi Minh 25 years ago. This event is commemorated by exhibitions and wall-posters everywhere.

It is a shock to be reminded that the attack launched in 1945 by the returning French was facilitated by British troops who had landed in the South following the Japanese military collapse.

The North Vietnamese have vivid memories of the war against the French, Americans are bombers, strafers, killers from the sky and aggressors against their Southern compatriots, a more remote enemy than the French colonialists, whose bitter harvest is recorded in the atrocity photographs and reconstructed exploding battlefields in the great anniversary exhibition now being staged in Hanoi.

The director of the exhibition speaking of those 25 years, said: 'We are the generation of sacrifice. Spiritual satisfaction has been our reward. The new generation will see the fruits of our struggle.'

Although judged by Western standards, living conditions are poor (not by Asian standards, we were reminded by a resident Indian) life is by no means intolerable when compared with the not so distant past.

Everyone who discussed his own life recalled the century of 'forced labour' under the French.

'We slept under the bridges, and worked 16 hours a day, every day.'

## Women's role

By comparison, the working week of six days, eight hours, two weeks holiday and rents no more than 1 per cent of a wage makes even a one-roomed flat seem attractive.

Women play a major role in the new society. With the men in the armed forces, women have taken the strain in field and factory alike. Soldiers strolling hand in hand in the parks are of both sexes.

The attractive, shy 26-year-old chairman of Dong Tien village in Than Hoa province of 5,000 inhabitants, proudly surrounded by a committee with a female majority, emphasised that women are commonly managers of co-operatives throughout the countryside.

She said that before liberation, women were slaves, having no political or social life. Responsible for 5,000 in her district, she said that women had been freed as surely as the workers, and that equality was their due. 'After all we fought for liberation.'

In the same village we saw the simple hospital, staffed by women doctors, and one school. This dual set-up exists in all villages, a post-revolutionary product.

With medical facilities on the spot none of the 120 babies born yearly died, a staggering improvement on the old death rate of almost 50 per cent.

The road back to Hanoi crossed the famous Ham Rong River, an amazing patchwork construction which does not have an original strut remaining after concentrated bombing attacks.

It is claimed that the bridge was the target of 1,700 separate air blows, and that 99 planes were destroyed.

The surrounding pitted, lily strewn paddy fields and the twisted iron debris in the fast flowing yellow river bear testimony to the scope of the U.S. attempt to blow away this link with the south.

Thousands of anti-aircraft guns, machine guns, and rifles in the hands of girls straight from the fields, had protected the bridge through four years of fire. It was stated that it was out of commission for short periods only, the longest being two days.

Every night the lattice-work swarmed with welders as holes were filled, ties strengthened and the floor relaid. This episode was typical of many.

'The Self-Defence Squads' are everywhere. Rifle drill is practised by all. A waitress, Nan, pretty, feminine, tiny, is the sharp-shooter of the group which defends the hotel.

Russian journalists recall with some embarrassment watching through the windows of their hotel as American planes streamed across the sky while the roof rattled with the blast of guns handled by female staff who daily served their drinks and hung their mosquito nets.

All this fighting structure remains in readiness. Everyone proudly recites the statistics of over 3,500 planes destroyed, and exudes confidence in their vastly increased ability to withstand future major attacks.

Their industry is growing, they have a united people 'millions as one' and a unity which they are confident crosses the borders to all parts of the south, occupied or liberated."

"During our visit we met Hoang Tung, central committee member of the Vietnamese Party of Labour and Editor of the People's Daily, who spoke to us about the military situation in Vietnam.

He acknowledged that the Tet offensive of 1968 had not defeated the Americans. Only a nation of the power of the United States could have withstood the battering it received that year.

He pointed out that the French had started with two divisions and ended at Dien Bien Phu with ten divisions. Even after that defeat France had 200,000 men in Vietnam, but they would have only continued the war as mercenaries of America.

'Another 800,000 still available was not enough,' he said. 'Men are not enough. Total defeat does not depend only on the destruction of human beings. The Americans have the economic strength. But Tet was damaging enough to force de-escalation'.

#### **Patient Work**

He added: 'If they couldn't win at the height of their effort how can they win now? Vietnamisation is an admission of their weakness as well as an impossible target.'

On the extension of the war to Cambodia, he pointed out that three nations are now fighting the American presence. 'Fifty million people of

Indo-China are now against them. Nixon can control a few but the rest are against him; all we have to do is to inflict unacceptable losses on them. In all discussions the indivisibility of Vietnam was stressed. A misunderstood word from a British TV cameraman who accompanied us prompted a furious lecture on the 'one-ness' of the country from an elderly French-speaking waiter.

In the jungle rest-house at a meal which would have won a Michelin commendation the cook, who was dragged from the kitchen to receive our humble thanks, spoke at length on the wonderful ingredients which will grace Vietnam tables when unity with our Southern brothers unites the nation's fruit and vegetables.

The division is as illogical as the suggestion that Manchester and London belong to different nations.

Despite this rejection of the present arbitrary split between North and South, there is a disposition to be patient. This was confirmed by discussions with the Provisional Government of the South.

While we were in Vietnam, the news of the new eight-point initiative in Paris broke. We were visiting the old US Embassy, now ironically the home of the Southern Provisional Revolutionary Government.

The spokesman, Truong Cong Dong, affirmed the two main proposals: the safe withdrawal of US troops if June 30 1971, was an agreed deadline, and their readiness to include all social groupings (with the exception of Thieu-Ky-Kiem) in a coalition Government.

He emphasised that this Government would rule South Vietnam separately, and unity would only come by the express wishes of the Southern people.

'We would respect the right of self-determination,' he said.

When asked about the apparent contradiction of two separate Governments and territories, he shrugged: 'That is today's reality.'

#### **Central points**

They are not hopeful of the Paris talks. It is no surprise that the Nixon proposals have been rejected. That so-called peace plan does not include the two central conditions raised in every discussion: there is no date of withdrawal and there is no provision for a coalition Government which includes the National Liberation Front and excludes the hated puppet trio, Thieu, Ky and Kiem.

The PRG has a pronounced view of what neutrality means. It means trade with anyone including Britain and the United States.

#### **Investments**

This contrasted with its attitude to investments in South Vietnam.

Whether these remained sacrosanct depended on the policy of the Government of the country, of origin.

'Those who have practised neutrality will be respected' was the phrase used by the Trade Union Federation president, Viet, a 65 year old veteran Communist leader, first elected to the central committee in 1930 at the formation of the Indo-Chinese Party.

He was in prison at the time, released in 1936 by the amnesty declared at the victory of the Popular Front in France.

When asked which British firms are in the South, he laughed. 'Tell them in Britain that their money is threatened by following the Americans and they'll make themselves known if they have any commercial self-interest.'

#### Union leaders

He, and other trade union leaders, expressed great interest in the prospect of closer trade union contacts between our two countries.

We were introduced at the radio station to an unusually tall, elegant young woman, who broadcasts daily to the GIs in South Vietnam. The GIs call her 'Hanoi Hanna'.

'Hanna' (Thu Huong) was intrigued by an article in Stars and Stripes, the US Army newspaper, 'Hanna — Lotus flower or witch?' Comparing her with the Second World War Tokyo Rose, the magazine complained 'Tokyo Rose told sexy stories but Hanna makes politics sexy.'

She claimed that the troops listened to her regularly, as they mistrusted the official army news of the progress of the war in the South.

#### Radio men

Stating that captured US pilots had confirmed her wide public, the radio men spoke of the link which radio provided between the two parts of Vietnam.

The pilots in captivity have broadcast statements but rarely. The Vietnamese claim that many would condemn the war, but they are not encouraged as such statements would be counter-productive, carrying little conviction when coming from prison.

Greetings are relayed from Havana on festive days and holidays, and letters from American relatives confirm their reception.

The attitude of the Vietnamese to the enemy, whether American or supporters of the Southern puppet Government, is unambiguous. Reform, and all is forgiven; be captured, and venom evaporates.

Consistent emphasis is given to the absence of revenge-seeking, which is the official guarantee embodied in the proposals submitted for settlement of the war.

'We are revolutionaries,' said Southern trade union leader Hung. 'There will be no revenge. We will remould and re-educate.'

There is little doubt that Soviet economic and military help has guaranteed a total lack of racialism in the average citizen.

This was evidenced by the prolonged applause as we passed a crowded military train in the dead of night. The cries of 'Koroshlo!' confirmed that we were mistaken for Russians. But the discovery that we were British trade unionists did not alter their warm welcome.

#### Bitterness

But the bitterness against the Americans was total. The United States bears the responsibility for extending the nine-year-war against the French to 25 years of sacrifice and privation.

The plans for rapid development have been curtailed by their aggression. National independence is still an objective not achieved by their Southern compatriots.

Kindergartens still heartbreakingly practise air-raid drill, and the towns still bristle with anti-aircraft armoury.

And the bombing has not stopped. Between the 17th and 19th parallels continuous air attacks occur. Although they would not allow us to visit the area — for our safety, they assured us — we met victims of recent anti-personnel bombing. A young girl who is partially paralysed by pellets, and an old woman badly injured when a bomb killed her two companions in a slit trench.

Examples of explosive devices were shown in the American War Crimes Commission, now in session, of small, pretty coloured plastic bombs, which undoubtedly would attract inquisitive children, capable of killing at a touch.

It is important that we should understand that the bombing, which formally ended in November, 1968, still continues in the Southern parts of North Vietnam. Even here the Americans have brutally broken their word. The raids are systematic and have no purpose but terror.

The solution to the Vietnamese problem will have to take into account the oneness of the country. The Geneva agreements of 1954 created what was to be a temporary artificial division.

That division regrouped the Vietnamese Liberation Army to the North so that the French could withdraw and elections take place for all Vietnam.

The American involvement and the failure to carry out the provisions of the agreement are now matters of history. It is a history which involves Britain as the co-chairman of the Geneva agreement, and Vietnamese never tired of reminding us of our role.

When we talked finally to the Foreign Minister, and Deputy Prime Minister, Nguyen Du Thinh, he spoke of Britain's failure to remain the guardian of 1954's terms.

'Both Labour and Tory,' he said, 'have trailed behind the Americans. It is impossible for Britain to carry out its obligations when associated so closely with US policy.'

Fully informed on the internal debate in the United Kingdom and the personalities involved, he spoke of Vietnam's desire for a political settlement. However, when asked whether Paris could solve the impasse, he passed on the responsibility to Nixon.

'We have made all the proposals and it's up to the United States. We will negotiate, but American troops must be withdrawn. The eight points have been approved by most of the world.'

'If agreement is not reached in Paris, we will continue to struggle politically, diplomatically and militarily for national independence. I hope you will make that clear to the British people.'

When he was asked whether June 30, 1971, was a deadline after which escalation would take place he replied that military decisions would doubtless be made on the battlefield.

How long would the war last?

He laughed. 'We have fought for 25 years. We will go on until we have achieved national independence. Time is on our side.'



### Dissociate

When asked how we could best help the cause of the Vietnamese in Britain, he replied: 'It is not my job to tell British people how to manage their affairs. But American imperialism relies heavily on the moral support from the United Kingdom. If your country were to dissociate from American aggression this would add dramatically to US isolation.'

He once again emphasised the desire of the Vietnamese, both North and South, Government and Liberation forces, for a political settlement.

But that settlement must guarantee political and national independence. If those objectives cannot be achieved by talks, they will be fought for.

The quiet confidence of Thinh contrasts with the slaughter which has disfigured this country. Death and willingness to die for independence has become a way of life.

Throughout the visit we were reminded daily that despite all obstacles Socialism is being built. Although there is no principle of absolute equality, differences in standards are small. Everyone plays a part, and respect for individuals is paramount.

The confidence of the leaders is shared by everyone. There is every reason for that faith. A people which, united has held back the biggest war machine of imperialism ever seen, can be certain that they can build a Socialist future'.

### THE WAY TO END THE WAR

On September 17th 1970, Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, the leader of the delegation of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam, made a statement at the Paris Peace Conference.

She said that the United States was responsible for the stalemate at the Paris talks.

"The Delegation of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, her Government, had taken part in the Paris Conference on Vietnam in order to search for a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem, on the basis of respect for the Vietnamese people's fundamental national rights, and the right of the people of South Vietnam to genuine self-determination.

Contrary to what people had expected, the US Government was not concerned at all about a real settlement of the South Vietnam problem, although it had to attend the Paris Confer-

ence. It had not ceased claiming its 'goodwill' for 'Peace', but actually pursued a policy of aggression against Vietnam, and wanted to win a military victory, and negotiate from a position of strength.

**The US Government failed to distinguish between the aggressors — who are the US — and the Vietnamese people — who are resisting aggression.**

### LET'S MAKE PROGRESS

To respond to the deep desire for peace of broad sectors of the people in South Vietnam, in the United States and in the world and on the instructions of her Government, Madame Binh suggested a number of proposals.

She suggested that the US government must put an end to its war of aggression in Vietnam, stop the policy of 'Vietnamization' of the war, totally withdraw from South Vietnam its troops and weapons, as well as those of the other foreign countries in the US camp, without posing any condition whatsoever, and dismantle all US military bases in South Vietnam.

**If the US government declared it would withdraw from South Vietnam all its troops and those of the other foreign countries in the US camp by June 30, 1971, the People's Liberation Forces will refrain from attacking the withdrawing troops of the United States and those of other foreign countries in the US camp, and the parties would engage at once in discussions on ensuring safety for the total withdrawal from South Vietnam of US troops and those of the other foreign countries in the US camp, and releasing captured troops.**

The question of the Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam would then be resolved by the Vietnamese parties among themselves.

The present Thieu Ky Khiem administration was an instrument of the US policy of aggression, was opposing peace and calling for the intensification and expansion of the war.

The restoration of genuine peace in South Vietnam therefore necessitated the formation in Saigon of an administration without Thieu Ky Khiem, an administration which stands for peace, independence, neutrality, which improves the people's living conditions, which ensures democratic liberties such as freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, freedom of belief, and releases those who have been jailed for the political reasons. **The Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam was prepared to enter into talks with such an administration on a political settlement of the South Vietnam problem so as to put an end to the war and**

restore peace in Vietnam.

The South Vietnamese people would then decide themselves the political regime of South Vietnam through really free and democratic general elections. They would elect a national assembly, work out a Constitution of a national and democratic character, and set up a government reflecting the entire people's aspirations and will for peace, independence, neutrality, democracy and national harmony.

The provisional coalition government would include three components:

- Representatives of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam.
- Representatives of the Saigon Administration, really standing for Peace, Independence, neutrality and democracy.
- Representatives of various political and religious groupings standing for Peace, independence, neutrality and democracy including those who, for political reasons, have to live abroad.

The provisional coalition government would implement the agreements reached by the parties.

The provisional coalition Government would carry out a policy of national harmony, ensure the democratic freedoms of the people, prohibit all acts of terror, reprisal, and discrimination against those who have collaborated with either side, stabilise and improve the living conditions of the people and organise general elections to form a coalition government.

The provisional coalition government would pursue a foreign policy of peace and neutrality; and establish diplomatic relations with all countries regardless of their political regime, **including the United States**, in accordance with the five principles of peaceful coexistence.

**VIETNAM IS ONE THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE IS ONE.**

The reunification of Vietnam will be achieved step by step, by peaceful means, on the basis of discussions and agreements between the two zones, without the coercion or annexation from either side, without foreign interference.

After the agreements aimed at putting an end to the war, and restoring peace in Vietnam, were signed, the parties would implement the measures laid down for a cease-fire in South Vietnam.

Madam Binh concluded: "To attain a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam declares its readiness to get in touch immediately with the representatives of various political tendencies and religions in the country and abroad, **including members of the present Saigon Administration, except Thieu, Ky and Khiem.**

## THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

We conclude this pamphlet with extracts from the address made to the 1970 T.U.C., by Miss Huguette Plamondon, the Fraternal Delegate from the Canadian Labour Congress. She said:

"...It is irrelevant what country you are from, or what is the colour of your skin or religious beliefs or whatever are the problems; the workers' problems are basically the same all over the world. Organised labour can make progress only as the rest of society makes progress. The labour movement must be an instrument of social progress and social justice. Although unionism is a means by which workers and their families can improve their own standards of living, it must be a means by which, in co-operation with men and women of goodwill, in all walks of life throughout the world, we can make our contribution to improve the quality of our society.

We must work towards ending a society which tolerates and perpetuates two groups, the 'privileged' and the 'under privileged'. A Society based on the segregation of the 'have' and the 'have not' makes a segregated society and a segregated society is an anti-labour society. This kind of society brings ultimately the destruction of democratic values. It emasculates moral values and the principal of human values. It is the kind of society which promotes hatred, discrimination, destruction of human dignity and war is the by-product. Organised labour must be dedicated in the great crusade to make a kind of world which will offer common opportunities for all, within a single society ...

... Labour must fight for civil rights, civil liberties, adequate housing for all, elimination of poverty, hunger and diseases throughout the world. We must fight for a rational world community in which nations would live in peace.

... We are building a labour movement not to patch up the world, we must build the kind of labour movement that will remake the world, where social justice will prevail. We are for PEACE because PEACE has become a condition for human survival.

What good is the best contract if the world winds up in a rubble of radio active ashes. Hungry men are desperate men, and desperation is the ingredient that makes WAR. No country, no nation can preach non-violence at home while escalating mass violence in another country. We must mobilise for PEACE rather than wider theaters of war.

May I say, in passing, that the Canadian Labour Congress has condemned the United States for the WAR in Indo-China and I am proud to say, that my union 'The Amalgamated Meat Cutters', representing some 500,000 members through Secretary-Treasurer Brother Pat Gorman, has declared, 'We do not believe that the leader of our great American Trade Union family, the AFL-CIO, speaks for that family in supporting the President of the United States'.

...We must be dedicated to what the poet, Thomas Curtis Clark said: "Let us no more be true to boasted race or clan, but to our highest dream, 'The Brotherhood of Man'."

This is the key to VICTORY in our struggle against misery, oppression and war. This is our task and we shall overcome. UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL.

