

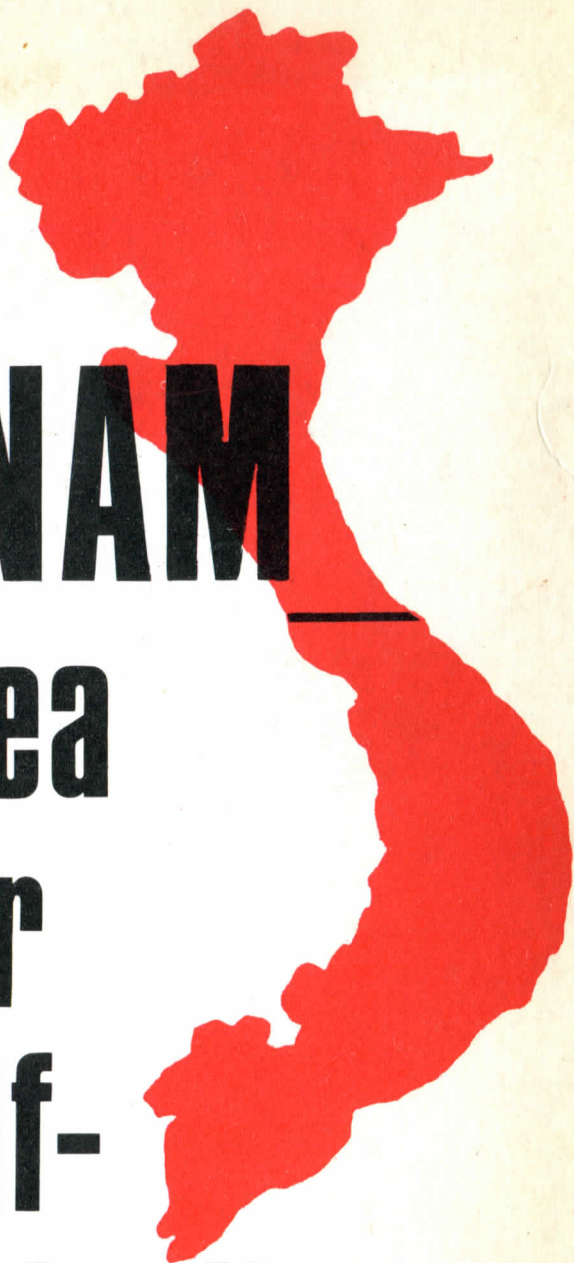
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ONE SHILLING

VIETNAM

**a plea
for
self-**

determination



1st Lieut
H. H. H.
1970

A PLEA FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

THE United States is expecting to put half a million troops into Vietnam in 1967 and the Administration openly estimates that the war there will continue for another five years.

But doubts are growing as to whether America can win in Vietnam and if she wins what it is, in fact, that she will have won.

Speaking in New Jersey on May 24th, 1966, U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said: 'Twenty years of outside intervention and the presence of a succession of foreign armies have so profoundly affected Vietnamese political life that it seems illusory to represent it as a mere contest between communism and liberal democracy.' There was growing evidence, he went on, that the so-called 'fight for democracy' was no longer relevant to the realities of the situation.

The original limited aim, to provide help and advice to the South Vietnamese against local communist infiltration has in fact now become a grim American struggle to contain communist China. A civil war has been translated into part of a global confrontation. It should never have happened. The political and military quagmire in Vietnam today has arisen from a fatal misreading of events. The key is the firm American belief that Vietnam is part of a Chinese design to expand her power and communist ideology throughout South East Asia as a start to world domination. Without this background fear the war in Vietnam would be much easier to settle.

How It All Started

FOR 1,000 years, until the tenth century, Vietnam was a province of China. She then gained her independence, but continued to pay tribute to the Chinese emperors until the nineteenth. She has, therefore, strong cultural affinities with the Chinese, but also has a strong desire to remain independent of them. In 1883 the Vietnamese rulers signed a treaty accepting a French protectorate of the country and this continued until finally terminated by the Geneva Conference in 1954.

The struggle for independence, however, started much earlier. As far back as 1925 Ho Chi Minh had created an Association of Revolutionary Vietnamese Youth, which later amalgamated with two other communist movements to become the Indo-Chinese Communist Party with links in Siam, Indonesia and Malaysia. It had strong links with the peasants and was well organised, with Ho Chi Minh accepted as its natural leader. Its immediate object was to free Vietnam from French rule.

The Japanese, when they invaded South East Asia in 1941, usually worked with educated peoples of the country to maintain law and order

rather than through the colonial civil servants; thus many nationalists for the first time had a chance to govern—a factor of great importance in the move to throw off colonial rule in the post-war years. In French Indo-China this did not happen. The French themselves were prepared to co-operate with the Japanese, who consequently harshly suppressed any nationalist activity. Because of this both non-communist as well as communist nationalists went underground; as the latter were already well organised they took over the leadership of a coalition movement known as the Viet Minh. As leader, Ho Chi Minh held his position rather by virtue of his nationalism than his communism and, apart from help from Chiang Kai-shek's government, towards the end of the war the Viet Minh were also supported by the American Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA, in their fight against the Japanese.

When the Japanese capitulated the Viet Minh and supporting groups actually took over the government of Vietnam and, had the French had the sense to withdraw gracefully as a colonial power, as Britain did in India and Burma, there is little doubt that Ho Chi Minh would eventually have been the accepted leader of an independent, though probably communist, Vietnam.

Events, however, did not work out that way. The French came back and took over the civil administration of the country south of the 16th parallel. Because of his strong support in the North they were forced to recognise Ho Chi Minh's authority there and on March 6th, 1946, an agreement was signed at Hanoi between the French Commissioner in Tonking and Ho Chi Minh by which the Vietnamese agreed not to oppose the return of the French army and France recognised the Ho Chi Minh regime (the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) as 'a free state with its own government, parliament, army and finances, forming part of the Indo-Chinese Federation and the French Union'. A referendum was to be held to decide whether the rest of Vietnam should be united and a military annexe to the agreement provided that French troops, with the possible exception of those guarding bases, would be withdrawn from Vietnam by 1952.

In April and July, 1946, there were conferences between the French and Ho Chi Minh to try and implement this agreement. In June the French established a provisional government in the South which, like the North, was declared to be an independent republic within the Indo-Chinese Federation. The Viet Minh considered this a breach of the Hanoi agreement and relations with the French deteriorated. On 23rd November the French bombarded Haiphong; on December 19th the Viet Minh launched an attack on the French in Hanoi and on all French garrisons in North and Central Vietnam. This was the start of a war that lasted eight years.

Though driven from the northern towns the Viet Minh retained control of the countryside; meanwhile, in the South, the French had established Bao Dai as head of a puppet government, but he proved incapable of winning popular support. The Viet Minh made no attempt to hide its

communist inclinations and in 1950 was recognised as the official government of Vietnam by The People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union. Allegations that it received substantial military supplies and equipment from China, however, have never been fully substantiated.

According to the Pentagon Press Office, from 1962-1964 15,000 weapons were captured from the Viet Minh guerrillas (while 27,400 were lost to them). Of the total captured in the 18 months from June 1962 to January 1964 only 179 could be identified as of communist origin and these included some from Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. Concrete evidence from the earlier years has never been forthcoming.

American Involvement

FIRST U.S. involvement in Vietnam started in 1950 in support of the French. By 1954 the French Budget showed that 78% of the cost of the war in Indo-China was found by the United States. Undoubtedly part of the reason for this support was the communist victory in China in 1949. In American eyes this transformed the situation from a local to a much bigger struggle.

This is confirmed in a letter* from President Eisenhower sent to Sir Winston Churchill on April 4th, 1954, just before the fall of Dien Bien Phu on May 8th.

He wrote: 'If . . . Indo-China passes into the hands of the communists the ultimate effect on our and your global strategic position with the consequent shift in the power ratios throughout Asia and the Pacific could be disastrous and, I know, unacceptable to you and me . . . This has led to the hard conclusion that the situation in South East Asia requires us urgently to take serious and far-reaching decisions.' He went on: 'The preliminary lines of our thinking were sketched out by Foster Dulles . . . when he said that under the conditions of today the imposition on South East Asia of the political system of communist Russia and its Chinese communist ally, by whatever means, would be a grave threat to the whole free community, and that in our view this possibility should now be met by united action and not passively accepted.'

The Geneva Conference, 1954

HOWEVER, already the heavy casualties suffered by French forces in Vietnam and the doubtful prospects of bringing the war to any satisfactory conclusion had forced the French government during 1953 and early 1954 to consider the possibilities of a negotiated peace.

In February, 1954, it was announced that there would be a conference in Geneva on 26th April to discuss the settlement of the Korean question and the problem of restoring peace in Indo-China. Representatives of the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom were appointed co-chairmen. No progress was made on Korea, but on 8th May—the very day of the fall of

* Why Vietnam? U.S. Information Service, October 1965.

Dien Bien Phu—discussions on Indo-China began. Those represented at the conference were Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, France, Laos, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (Viet Minh), the State of Vietnam (the French-supported Bao Dai regime), the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States. Two agreements emerged from the conference: The Geneva Armistice Agreement (Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities), on July 20th, 1954, and The Geneva Accords (Final Declaration) on July 21st.

The Armistice Agreement

THIS was strictly an armistice agreement signed by the Viet Minh and on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief of the French Union Forces in Indo-China.

It provided for a provisional military demarcation line (fixed at the 17th parallel) on either side of which the two parties were to regroup, and an intervening demilitarised zone. Article 14 stated that 'pending the general elections which will bring about the unification of Vietnam, the conduct of the civil administration in each regrouping zone shall be in the hands of the party whose forces are to be regrouped there in virtue of the present agreement'.

It also included two sub-paragraphs which were to have an important bearing on future events:—

14(c) stated that 'Each party undertakes to refrain from any reprisals or discrimination against persons or organisations on account of their activities while 14(d) provided for any civilians residing in a district controlled by one party who wished to go and live in the zone assigned to the other party should be permitted and helped to do so by the authorities in that district. (Up to 20th July, 1955, it was estimated that about 890,000 refugees, the majority of them Catholics, moved from north to south of the demarcation line and about 140,000 moved north from the south.)*

Article 16 prohibited introduction into Vietnam of any troop reinforcements and additional military personnel (other than replacements) and Articles 17 and 18 prohibited the introduction of new military weapons or the establishment of new military bases throughout Vietnam territory.

The Agreement also established an International Control Commission composed of representatives of Canada, India and Poland, with the Indian as chairman. This Commission was to set up fixed and mobile inspection teams at certain points to ensure that the terms of the armistice were carried out.

The Geneva Accords (Final Declaration)

THIS section of the agreements was not open to signature by any nation, but was agreed to by formal declaration by those present (except the United States) and is binding in international law. The U.S. though not prepared to join in the Declaration, issued a unilateral statement.

The Declaration expressed satisfaction at the ending of hostilities, noted the clauses prohibiting the introduction into Vietnam of foreign troops, military personnel, arms and munitions and that no military bases under the control of a foreign power should be established and recognised that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Vietnam was to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line was provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary.

It went on to say that the settlement of political problems, effected on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity and territorial integrity, should permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedoms, guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free general elections by secret ballot. General elections should be held in July, 1956, under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the Member States of the International Supervisory Commission. Consultation would be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from July 20th, 1955.

The American Statement

THE United States pointed out in a separate statement that she was not prepared to join with the other members of the Conference in approving the Declaration, but was resolved to devote her efforts to the strengthening of peace in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations. She took note of the Geneva agreements of July 20th and 21st and affirmed that 'In the case of nations now divided against their will, we shall continue to seek to achieve unity through free elections supervised by the United Nations to insure that they are conducted fairly'.

In addition the Statement said that the U.S. would refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb the Agreements in accordance with Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter and would view any renewal of aggression in violation of the Agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security. (The U.S. rests its case for intervention now in South Vietnam as resisting such violation by the North.)

What Went Wrong?

THE Viet Minh were reluctant to accept even the provisional partition laid down in the Armistice Agreement, which allowed them slightly less than half the country when they had gained control of three-quarters of it. Under pressure from China and the Soviet Union, however, they did accept, believing that, as stipulated in the Declaration, elections would take place over the whole country within two years.

There can be no doubt that the Accords make it clear that the 17th parallel was taken as a convenient cease-fire line; it was not meant to be a permanent boundary dividing Vietnam.

* Vietnam, C.O.I. Feb. 1960.

A recent report to the American Friends Service Committee, 'Peace in Vietnam', clearly states that 'the Viet Minh accepted this temporary loss because of the explicit promise in both the armistice agreement and in the Geneva Declaration that within a period of two years national elections would be held to unify the country. They had ever reason to believe that these elections would take place because the agreements stipulated that France, the other party to the armistice, was to maintain control of civil administration in the South until elections were held (Article 14a of the Armistice Agreement). In effect, then, the elections and the military truce were interdependent, a fact often disregarded'.

Despite the agreements, however, the French withdrew the following year without honouring their obligations concerning the elections. They transferred power to the Bao Dai regime with the support of the U.S. Bao Dai was soon supplanted by Ngo Dinh Diem and in November, 1954, America openly supported him in establishing an anti-communist state in South Vietnam. Ngo Dinh Diem announced in 1955 that the elections promised under the Agreements would not now be held. For a further three years Ho Chi Minh persisted in trying to get them held, but with no result.

Whatever one's views may be about the rights and wrongs of American policy in Vietnam, it is not difficult to understand why the Viet Minh felt that they had been double-crossed.

Ho Chi Minh's communist affiliations were well known to all the participants of the Geneva Agreements and, despite this, his reputation as a nationalist leader would almost certainly have given him control if unfettered elections had been held. The Agreements even went so far as to lay down specific dates for the elections and for the consultations to take place in advance of them.

Looking back it would appear that to the Western powers the Accords were in reality an expedient way of extricating France from an untenable position. The Western powers were themselves divided at Geneva and were by no means agreed that Vietnam should be united through elections if this meant that Ho Chi Minh might get control. The Americans were chary of the Agreements; the rest were anxious to extricate France. In the years that followed the American position became the dominant voice and power in South Vietnam. The American view of the nature of the challenge in S.E. Asia from the Chinese and the Viet-Minh determined their policies. The rest of the West followed on with varying degrees of enthusiasm or anxiety. The result has a great bearing on the tragic history of the next ten years.

The Continuing War

DESPITE her political interest and financial aid to the French, America was not militarily involved in Vietnam up to 1955. Even then her commitment to the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, as set out in a letter from President

Eisenhower in October, 1954, was a qualified pledge of economic support, requiring on the part of the regime implementation of land and other reforms. The Americans genuinely hoped to establish a strong, non-communist government in South Vietnam as a counter-attraction to Ho Chi Minh and his followers and as a bulwark against the spread of communism in Asia. They were not anxious to become militarily involved.

Ngo Dinh Diem had a reputation as a nationalist, but he had been abroad from 1950-1954 and had not, therefore, been active in the critical years against the French. His prestige was nothing like that of Ho Chi Minh, and he found little support in the countryside.

His regime was authoritarian, oppressive and corrupt and he actually revoked land reforms that had been inaugurated by the Viet Minh in areas formerly under their control. When in 1958 the Viet Minh had given up hope of coming to power through elections and began to bestir themselves again, their task was made easier by general unrest and disillusion in the country. side.

Former Viet Minh supporters began to organise into guerrilla bands (the Vietcong) and undertake terrorist activities. In part this was as reprisal for the failure of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime to honour the amnesty pledges of the Armistice Agreement of 1954 and his persecution of suspected Viet Minh supporters. In 1960 Ho Chi Minh's government formally recognised the Vietcong activities and those adhering to it as the National Liberation Front. By 1963 it was obvious that Ngo Dinh Diem was incapable of controlling this situation, despite American backing with aid, weapons and military advice. He was replaced by a military junta which was itself overthrown by a coup d'etat on January 30th, 1964. Since then there has been a continuous shuffle of generals, the last to come to the top being Air Marshal Ky, who took over in June, 1965.

Despite this, Vietcong activity has increased. The U.S. White Paper, 'Aggression from the North' (February 27th, 1965), gave tentative figures about this, though doubts have been thrown on their full authenticity. According to this White Paper, between 1959 and the end of 1964 nearly 20,000 Vietcong officers, soldiers and technicians had moved from north into south Vietnam. Another 17,000 were believed to have moved. Most of these latter had been born in South Vietnam, had fought the French and travelled north after the cease-fire in 1954. Three out of four of the 7,000 Vietcong who came south in the year 1964 were, however, believed to be natives of North Vietnam because of the heavy casualties that had been suffered by Vietcong forces.

Full time strength of the Vietcong was believed to be over 32,000 as compared with under 20,000 in 1961. Supporting this force (according to the White Paper) were 60,000 to 80,000 part-time guerrillas organised at company level into companies of 50 or more. In February, 1965, over 10 tons of Vietcong weapons and ammunition were discovered in a cache near Cap Varella, following the sinking of a supply ship off shore; they originated in China, Czechoslovakia and other countries.

American Military Aid

BECAUSE of the deteriorating position, on February 8th, 1962, the United States announced the establishment of the American Military Assistance Command (Vietnam) and increased her strength from 700 men in 1961 to 12,000 by mid-1962. Four years later, in mid-1966, there are 275,000 troops in South Vietnam and these are to be increased to 400,000 by the end of the year. According to a Times report of May 31st, 1966, there are plans to raise this number to 500,000 by next spring and to 750,000 by the end of 1967. In 1966 the U.S. will drop as many bombs on Vietnam as were dropped by all the Allies on Germany during the whole of the second world war. In fairness it must be added, however, that despite this, the human toll cannot compare, as hitherto, the Americans have been careful to limit their targets and avoided bombing cities.

In addition and, perhaps, even more disturbing, is the enormous U.S. military build-up in Hawaii, based on the assumption that China is the enemy in the 1970s as Russia was in the 1950s. Reporting on March 12th, 1965, the Times Washington correspondent, referred to Mr. McNamara's remarks to a Congressional Committee, that the choice was not simply whether to continue the present efforts to keep South Vietnam free, but rather to continue the struggle to halt communist expansion in Asia.

Attempts at Negotiation

THERE has been no lack of effort to get the contenders to the conference table, but so far without success. The following are some of these attempts made by governments other than contenders.

- May 20th, 1964 France proposed reconvening a 14 Nation conference on Laos in Geneva. In part the idea behind this was that the negotiations could 'overspill' on to Vietnam. The U.S. and Britain rejected the proposal though it was endorsed by the Soviet Union, Poland, Cambodia, India and China.
- Feb. 7th, 1965 President Shastri of India proposed a meeting between Russian and American leaders to solve the problems of S.E. Asia.
- Feb. 11th, 1965 U Thant called for international negotiations on Vietnam inside or outside the UN.
- Feb. 20th, 1965 Britain proposed to the Soviet Union that the two countries, as co-chairmen of the Geneva conference, should explore the Vietnam question with all the Geneva Conference countries. The Soviet Union refused, proposing that a condemnatory statement of the United States and a demand for the withdrawal of American forces should be made instead; but it was later revealed that when in Peking that month Mr. Kosygin had tried to persuade the Chinese to help the United States to find a way out of the Vietnam situation. (Times, November 11th, 1965.)

March 8th, 1965 U Thant proposed that the United States, the U.S.S.R., Great Britain, France, China and North and South Vietnam should participate in a preliminary conference. (The United States rejected the offer the following day until North Vietnam stopped its aggression against South Vietnam.)

April 1st, 1965 17 non-aligned nations meeting in Belgrade appealed for immediate negotiations without preconditions.

June, 1965 The Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London decided to send a delegation to all countries involved in the Vietnam conflict to seek a peaceful settlement. The governments of North Vietnam and Peking rejected the Commission.

Subsequently Mr. Harold Wilson sent Mr. Harold Davies, M.P., out to Vietnam to explore the possibilities of peace, but he was unable to meet the Viet Minh leaders in Hanoi.

Apart from these international efforts both the United States and the Hanoi Government have declared readiness to negotiate but apparently on irreconcilable terms.

Hanoi Peace Offers

THE American Friends Service Committee Report lists seven offers of negotiation from Hanoi that the United States has either ignored or rebuffed. The first of these was in September, 1964, when the North Vietnamese government offered, through U Thant, to send a representative to Rangoon to meet with a U.S. representative and discuss ending hostilities in Vietnam. This information only became public in July, 1965, when Mr. Rusk, Secretary of State, confessed that his 'antennae' indicated that the North Vietnamese were not serious. No effort had been made to find out by following up the hint. In December, 1964, Ho Chi Minh notified France of his desire to discuss an accommodation with the United States and, in early February, 1965, President de Gaulle, at the urging of North Vietnam, requested a reconvening of the Geneva Conference to discuss the future of South East Asia and the United Nations.

The United States informed France that she had no mandate to act as mediator and was not interested in a return to the conference table at that time.

On April 8th, 1965, the Hanoi Government published its 'Four Point' peace plan.

It stated that it was the 'unswerving policy of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam strictly to respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements and correctly to implement their basic provisions' by

- (1) Recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people, and the withdrawal from South Vietnam of all U.S. troops and bases and cancellation of its military alliance with South Vietnam.

- (2) Pending peaceful re-unification of Vietnam the military provisions of the 1964 Geneva Agreements must be strictly respected.
- (3) The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the Vietnamese people themselves, in accordance with the programme of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front, without any foreign interference.
- (4) The peaceful reunification of Vietnam must be settled by the Vietnamese people in both zones without foreign interference.

On April 20th U Thant referred to this and President Johnson's offer for 'unconditional discussions' of April 7th (see below) and said: 'I strongly hope that there will be a prompt follow-up on the stated willingness of the parties directly involved to enter into discussions and that no effort will be spared to get these discussions started with a minimum of delay.'

In May, 1965, the United States stopped bombing for five days and sent a secret message to Hanoi stating that the bombing suspension would continue if there were significant reductions in communist armed attacks in South Vietnam. The day before the bombing restarted North Vietnam contacted the French government and asked it to inform Washington that it was prepared to negotiate on the Four Points without demanding prior complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Vietnam.

Further offers came from Hanoi in November and December and on January 12th, 1966, the New York Times reported from Algiers that Vietcong sources there had hinted strongly that if Washington agreed to negotiate directly with the National Liberation Front the demand that the withdrawal of U.S. troops must precede negotiations might be dropped. It was pointed out that the National Liberation Front did not exist in 1954 when the Geneva Accords were signed and, as a quid pro quo for recognition of the front 'there would certainly be concessions on our part'.

U.S. Peace Offers

PRESIDENT JOHNSON has made a number of statements outlining America's conditions for peace negotiations. The most important of these was on April 7th, 1965 (the day before the Hanoi announcement of the four points) and the 14 points of January 4th, 1966.

On April 7th President Johnson said that the United States was ready for **unconditional** discussions to bring about an end to the war in Vietnam.

Speaking at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, the President said:—'The only path for reasonable men is the path of peaceful settlement. Such peace demands an independent Vietnam, securely guaranteed and able to shape its own relationships to all others, free from outside interference, tied to no alliance, a military base for no other country. These are the essentials of any peaceful settlement in Vietnam. There may be many ways to this kind of peace; in discussion or negotiation with the governments concerned; in large groups or small ones; in the reaffirmation of old agreements or their strengthening with new ones.'

He went on: 'We have stated this position over and over again 50 times or more, to friends and foes alike. And we remain ready, with this purpose, for unconditional discussions.'

By stressing negotiations with **governments**, thus ignoring the National Liberation Front and insisting on an independent South Vietnam, the President's 'unconditional discussions' were, of course, based on two very important conditions.

These conditions were somewhat modified on January 4th, 1966, when, in the midst of the President's peace efforts and suspension of bombing in early 1966, he issued a 14 point statement. Among other things the statement said that 'Hanoi's four points could be discussed along with other points which others might wish to propose', (point 6) and 'that the Vietcong would have no difficulty in having their views presented if Hanoi for a moment decides she wants to cease aggression' (point 13).

On February 8th, Mr. Averell Harriman, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large, explained the position further. He said that Washington would be willing to have the NLF participate in Vietnam peace talks as part of a North Vietnamese delegation, or as an 'independent group'. He stressed, however, that the NLF could not participate in any peace parley as a government.

On June 7th, 1966, Ambassador Arthur Goldberg, U.S. Permanent Representative at the United Nations, said: 'There should be a mutual cessation of all types of hostilities on all sides of the conflict. . . . The Parties to the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962, which were designed to settle the conflicts of Vietnam and Laos, should reconvene and should reaffirm these agreements and revitalise them as the basis for peace in South East Asia.'

The President's efforts to get talks going in January this year, when emissaries were sent to many capitals of the world and bombing was suspended for seven weeks, met with a cool official reception from Hanoi and Peking; the bombing was resumed at the beginning of February (despite the Vietcong hints on January 12th) and the bitter battle continued.

Meanwhile, a Buddhist revolt in Hue and DaNang has forced some reconstruction of the military government and promise of elections in South Vietnam in the autumn.

Vietnam and the United Nations

THE United States has tried on several occasions to bring the Vietnamese dispute before the Security Council, but the Council has been reluctant to become involved.

U Thant clearly stated, when in London in April, 1966, that in his view the United Nations could not deal with Vietnam. This was because two of the major disputants, North Vietnam and China, were not members of the UN and a fair assessment of the facts, therefore, was not possible.

He has, however, on several occasions tried to bring those involved round a conference table and has been outspoken on the need for a settlement.

Prospects of Negotiation

ALTHOUGH in the last year both the Hanoi and the United States governments have modified their original demands, the basic approach to a settlement is profoundly different.

The United States is demanding that there shall be an independent non-communist South-Vietnamese state; the North is demanding, in essence, that there shall be a united Vietnam, with elections as promised in the Geneva Accords of 1954, and the possibility, of course, of being controlled by the Viet Minh.

Further, Hanoi has demanded that the Vietcong (who are admitted to control most of the countryside in South Vietnam) should be given full negotiating status at any conference table. While originally refusing to contemplate this, the United States has now conceded that they should be included in the North Vietnamese delegation or as an independent group.

Hanoi initially demanded complete withdrawal of American troops and bases before negotiations could begin. It has now hinted that prior withdrawal need not be a condition for talks and that cessation of the bombing might suffice.

One of Hanoi's four points insists that the affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people 'in accordance with the programme of the National Liberation Front, without any foreign interference'. One of the proposals in the programme is for the election of a new National Assembly through universal suffrage. Point 9 of the American 14 point programme demands free elections in South Vietnam to 'give the South Vietnamese a Government of their own choice'.

There would certainly appear to be a basis for discussion between the two sides. Surely the United States should at least try to test the possibilities out.

What of China?

IT was pointed out at the beginning of this pamphlet that China is the key to the American attitude in Vietnam. The United States administration appears to be convinced that she is intent on aggression and spreading communist ideology throughout Asia.

Increasingly this view is being questioned. In the Sunday Times on June 12th, 1966, Lord Caccia, former head of the Diplomatic Service, with long experience of China, said: 'China's action (in Korea, Tibet, India, etc.) does not invalidate the view that China has not yet shown any signs of adopting a policy of territorial expansion such as Hitler first proclaimed and then attempted. Rather the contrary.'

U Thant has pointed out that in countries such as his own, Burma, or in Nepal, where the governments have controlled communist insurrection with-

out asking for outside help, the Chinese have never interfered to help the insurgents. On the other hand, as pointed out in 'Peace in Vietnam', the Chinese feel that any government in Asia which permits itself to become an outpost of American military power poses a threat to the peace of Asia and at least indirectly to the security of China.

Perhaps we should recognise that Communist and Chinese influence is going to grow in Asia and that the sense of nationhood of the countries on her borders can be the strongest bulwark against this.

By its presence in Vietnam the United States is, in fact, creating a greater sympathy for China than would otherwise be the case. Alien white faces on Asian soil are too reminiscent of the humiliations of the colonial era to be acceptable and as we, the French, the Dutch and the Americans themselves in the Philippines have learned, a continued presence, short of outright domination, soon becomes untenable.

What of Democracy?

AS U Thant said firmly on May 24th this year, the so-called 'fight for democracy' in Vietnam is no longer relevant. There is no representative government there and cannot be until the fighting stops. **Only the Vietnamese people can decide how they want to be governed and that can only come about by the holding of the elections promised in the Geneva Declaration of 1954.** If the Viet Minh win this will have to be accepted. If they lose, it will be up to the non-communist government to cope with insurrection in the same way as the Burmese and others have done **alone**.

A Policy for Negotiation

THE elections proposed for a South Vietnam Assembly could contribute towards a settlement. U Thant has been asked to arrange for the supervision of these elections but, not unnaturally, has been reluctant to accept. In the present chaos in South Vietnam the United Nations could not be sure that it could enforce freedom from intimidation.

A first step, then, must be a truce to the fighting. Hanoi might accept this in return for an American assurance that the National Liberation Front will be recognised as a 'political party' in the south and can participate in the elections. Rather than the United Nations the International Control Commission (or a newly appointed one) should be asked to supervise the elections and all sides must undertake to accept the decision of the South Vietnamese people.

This would then offer an opportunity for the co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference—the Soviet Union and Britain—to convene a new conference to arrange, in consultation with the North and South Governments, for elections throughout Viet-Nam and the withdrawal of US and other foreign troops. This time, however, the Western powers must be prepared to honour commitments better than they did in the past, whatever may be the shortcomings of the other side and even if Ho Chi Minh wins.

Some such settlement must only be a preliminary, of course, to enabling China to take her seat at the United Nations and admitting a united Vietnam.

Britain and Vietnam

THE British government has been reluctant to criticise general American policy in Vietnam, in part, perhaps, in the belief that a friend exercises greater influence than a critic, although on June 30th, 1966, Mr. Wilson dissociated HMG from the bombing of oil installations in Hanoi and Haiphong.

Yet as U Thant said on May 24th:—

'The world has been watching the inexorable escalation of the war in Vietnam with increasing anxiety. Little by little, larger forces and more powerful armaments have been introduced, until an anguished and perplexed world has suddenly found that a limited and local conflict is threatening to turn into a major confrontation. And though the fear of a much larger conflict may still have a restraining influence upon the demands of military strategy the temptation to win a military success may still prove stronger than a more prudent call to reason. . . . All the forces of peace must join together to make their influence felt by the leaders of the countries engaged in this war, so that they may find a way to reverse its fateful trend and to restore peace before it is too late.'

His plea is all the more urgent as the United States intensifies the bombing of North Vietnam and President Johnson is reported as having decided that Vietnam should be divided as in Korea, with a separate Southern non-communist state under American protection. Britain must leave no doubt of her belief that a united Vietnamese people should determine their own future.

An end to the war in Vietnam by negotiation should not be considered as a defeat for the West, but as an indication of a real understanding of the issues involved and as a salute to the courage, tenacity and endurance of all the Vietnamese people.

Article 1(2) of the United Nations Charter states that one of the purposes of the UN is 'to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples'.

Britain has now an opportunity to help implement this principle. We must not allow it to slip.

January 1968

APPENDIX

DURING the last 18 months the war in Vietnam has increased in intensity and horror. As predicted, the United States has now over half a million troops in Vietnam and the bombing of North Vietnam has been steadily intensified.

Yet the proposals and counter proposals for getting the combatants round the conference table have continued. On December 30th 1967 Mr. Nguyen Duy Trinh, Foreign and Deputy Prime Minister of North Vietnam, told a Mongolian delegation that, once U.S. bombing and other military action against the North had ceased, Hanoi would be willing to take part in negotiations on 'relevant questions'. U Thant said that this confirmed his view that if the bombing ceased the North Vietnamese would come to the conference table within three or four weeks.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ales Bebler, President of the World Federation of United Nations Associations, has tried to convene a meeting of Britain, the U.S.S.R., Poland, India and Canada (i.e. the co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference and the three members of the International Control Commission) to propose a suitable settlement. Britain and Canada have agreed but India, Poland and the U.S.S.R., while welcoming the initiative, have felt unable to participate while the bombing of the North continues.

On September 29th 1967, President Johnson said that the United States was willing to stop aerial and naval bombardment of North Vietnam 'when this will lead promptly to productive discussion' . . . and if while discussions proceed 'North Vietnam would not take advantage of the bombing cessations or limitations'.

One may assume that by 'productive discussions' the President had in mind his 14 points of January 4th 1966 (see page 11) and elaborated by Mr. Dean Rusk on February 9th 1967. Some of the most relevant proposals are:—

1. Hanoi's four points for a settlement could be discussed along with other points which others may wish to propose.
2. The U.S. supports free elections in South Vietnam to give the South Vietnamese a government of their own choice. Mr. Rusk added 'We do not seek to exclude any segment of the South Vietnamese people from peaceful participation in their country's future.'
3. The question of the reunification of Vietnam should be determined by the Vietnamese through their own decision, though the implication is that they should be neutral and non-aligned.
4. The Vietcong would have no difficulty in being represented and having their views presented if Hanoi wants to cease aggression.

In March 1967 Ho Chi Minh sent a letter to President Johnson in which he restated his four points for a settlement. These were:—

1. The U.S. must stop definitely and unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.
2. There must be recognition of the South Vietnam National Liberation Front.
3. There must be withdrawal of all U.S. and satellite troops from South Vietnam.
4. The Vietnamese people must be allowed to settle their own affairs.

Apart from military demands the main *political* difference is the refusal of the United States hitherto to recognise the National Liberation Front as a political organisation in its own right. Yet, increasingly independent observers are coming to the conclusion that this is a key factor in any settlement. David Bonavia writing from Saigon (*Times*, November 27th 1967) said: 'The American position, it is true, allows for the N.L.F.'s view to be heard at any future peace talks with Hanoi, but so far as is known there has been no American or South Vietnam Government initiative to bring the N.L.F. to the negotiating table as a first step towards ending the war. Instead, the N.L.F. is expected to surrender its arms and throw itself on the mercy of its enemies.' He points out, as Harrison Salisbury did in earlier despatches at the beginning of 1967, that there are important policy differences between the N.L.F. and Hanoi. According to these and other sources the N.L.F. is interested in a policy of non-alignment without adherence to any block, communist or non-communist, and does not necessarily favour a communist-organised state in the south. On December 10th 1967, U Thant* reported that the N.L.F. had, in fact, sought to send representatives to the United Nations on the same basis as the Algerian N.L.F. ten years earlier, although this report was later denounced by Hanoi as 'sheer fabrication', and the U.S.A. had refused to issue visas.

Even if, as all must hope, the United States decides to stop the bombing andd President Ho Chi Minh agrees to come to the conference table the negotiations are unlikely to succeed unless the N.L.F. participates as a political force in its own right. There are some indications that the U.S.A. is beginning to realize this.

If this policy were followed up it might be possible to call a truce to the fighting on all sides and then convene the Geneva-type conference which both Hanoi and Washington are agreed can form the basis for discussions on the future of Vietnam.

Our job in Britain, apart from military considerations, is to persuade President Johnson of the wisdom of such recognition and to enlist the help of the Soviet Union in persuading Hanoi, in return, to make concessions in the forms of a truce to the fighting.

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