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OCTOBER 14, 1969
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COMMENT

AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM

by Greg Lee.

Vietnam or Indochina, has a long bloody history, stretching back over three decades. It has known many faces and many uniforms.

Contrary to popular belief, America's presence in Vietnam is over 25 years old. America's policies toward the Vietnams has been, tragically, complex and paradoxical.

At present, Americans view our actions in Vietnam as a necessary and well planned action of "freemen" against the inroads of Communist aggression. The truth is that our policies have been unclear and half-hearted and the present way is an out-growth of that confusion. The Vietnam War was started in the late 40's and early 50's when the post WW-II world was being reshaped and rebuilt.

It is imperative that the general public, in order to assess the present action in Vietnam, has a clear understanding of what has happened in Southeast Asia and the history of the "shifting sands" of our attitudes and policies.

Briefly, American policies in Vietnam, or Indochina, can be subdivided as follows:

1. Anti-Vichy 1940-45
2. Pro-Vietminh 1945-46
3. Pro-French 1950-54
4. Anti-French 1954-55
5. Economic Involvement 1954-61
6. Direct and Full Involvement 1964-

When France was overrun in 1940 by the Germans and an armistice had been signed with Hitler, French Indochina, like most of France's colonial possessions, was left to take care of itself. Unfortunately, due to the colony's closeness to Japan and its rich deposits of tin and rubber, Indochina became a predictable target of aggression from the Japanese.

It is significant that while Japan was pressing the French in Indochina to "cooperate," the United States could not or would not intervene to fight against the Japanese (The United States paid dearly for its neutrality at Pearl Harbor.). Requests for help from Indochina were never acted upon, and Indochina became subject to occupation by Japanese forces.

The next United States move in Indochina was to supply anti-Japanese (but still Communist) guerrilla forces under the command of North Vietnam's General Giap, with specially trained OSS instructors to train, supply, and lead the unarmed and untrained guerrillas. Unknown at the time, the United States was setting the stage for future developments.

With the end of the war in sight, the Big Three of the allies met at Yalta to discuss plans and schemes for rebuilding and reconstructing a better post-war world. As is often the case through history, the seeds of war are sown when men meet and the issue of colonial areas caused a great deal of harm and problems for the allies. But the "Big Three" decided that all colonies including Indochina would be returned to their former possessors. It was this conference that led to the present conflict in Vietnam.

VIJ Day made a Vietnam takeover in Hanoi possible.

Successfully hiding their Communist background, the Vietminh leaders managed to make it appear not only to the populace of Indochina but to the Chinese and French that they had already been recognized by the United States. In reality, though, no official recognition had taken place. The Vietminh were proceeding with plans to form a new government to represent the indochinese, all independent of France. Unfortunately, the Vietminh-United States relations worsened. Whether this was due to a deliberate mess-up or conversely to a lack of policy isn't clear yet, but the United States condemned itself to the present war in Vietnam, by not trying to mediate French and Vietminh positions. As relations between the west and the Vietminh worsened in late 1946, two ambassadors, Mr. Moffat and Mr. Landen were sent to Hanoi to see Ho Chi Minh several times. They were impressed with Ho, but decided in favor of helping the French rather than the newly formed French-dominated government. Thus Ho was left to face the returning French army. The first and last French-Indochinese war broke out on December 19, 1946. The United States occupied elsewhere in Europe ceased to be an effective arbiter in Southeast Asia until Korea in 1952.

MORATORIUM HEADQUARTERS IN THE THEATER TECHNICAL OFFICE IN THE LOBBY OF THE AUDITORIUM

COME IN AND SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO TO WORK FOR PEACE (October 15 only)

Troop Withdrawal Bags Down

by Joseph Kraft


SAIGON - The initial reduction of 25,000 troops ordered by President Nixon for Vietnam is due to be completed at the end of the week. But it will be very surprising if at that time total American forces here are less than 5000 below what they were when Mr. Nixon took office.

The American officials in Saigon are far less keen than Americans officials back home on the issue of troop withdrawal. And Saigon's formidable negative powers are said to certain to reduce withdrawal to mere tokenism unless the President shows far more determination on the issue than has thus far been displayed.

At the root of the issue are major but unavowed differences between Washington and Saigon on the overall situation in Vietnam. The conventional state side wisdom, that the Communists still have plenty of shots left in their locker, is not shared here. Here the prevailing view is that the other side is on the ropes.

The United States Military Commander, Gen. Creighton Abrams, believes that North
**LETTERS TO EDITOR**

**MORATORIUM**

I'd just like to write and express my views on the October Fifth Moratorium.

It seems that a great deal of talk and action has gone into the organization of this "Day of Peace," and I have been curious about any other views on the subject. Being a newspaperman, you also have to wonder about the role of the major issues confronting BOC, and so here are a few of the ideas of the Anti-Peace people, or at least what I can see of them.

1) This has been variously billed as a "reflective" reflection on this country's decisions on Vietnam's future,” and a day of strike on some campuses. Yet, at the same time, numerous overflowers seem to be looking at the moratorium as an act of protest. A student dissatisfaction at school and student dissatisfaction with the administration's national policies other than Vietnam. A strain of "If we're going to participate in a demonstration, we might as well show some understanding and concern for the cause of peace."

2) The main rallying cry seems to be "I'm not willing to participate in a demonstration where there is no just cause." I seem to the necessity of any cause for the protection of the people of Vietnam. I believe that until the free people of South Vietnam can stand on their own feet and fight the spread of Communist influence in that country, then we should remain and help them. They should not be abandoned. And we should participate in the communist countries of the world. The flow of Communist militiamen must be stopped, or else all of Southeast Asia will be. Respectfully, Kenneth J. Keenan

**A COMPANY REFUSES TO MOVE OUT**

Reprinted from the Boston Globe, Tuesday, August 26, 1969:

SONG CHANG VALLEY, Viet Nam — "This is the last time I'm being moved out of the jockeys' role of U.S. military occupation. Every time we've been moved out, it's been because we were, and by the same token the North Vietnamese are just as Vietnamese as their American brothers in the South. If you care to draw an even finer line, who the hell are the Viet Cong?"

"A Company," part of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade's battalion, informed battalion commander, "We refuse to move out," reported the company commander over a cranking field telephone.

"A Company of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade's battalion was involved in a day of occupation in the jungles of the rocky slope of Nui Lon Mountain, across a dead lazily north of Vietnam bunkers and trenches lines. For five days they had been pinned down in an area impossible to move. Each time they had been thrown back by the impossible enemy.

"A Company" had been waiting impatiently for A Company to move out. Bacon had taken over the battalion afterLt. Elliot P. Howard was killed in a helicopter crash with Associated Press photographer Oliver Noonan, and six other men. Ever since the crash, they've been delayed.

The company commander told the company that if they refused to move out, they were members of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. The company commander then informed the entire company that if they refused to move out, they would be members of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade.

"A Company" had been to Vietnam, and they were members of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. The company commander then informed the entire company that if they refused to move out, they would be members of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade.

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CAMPUS INTERVIEWS...
Query on Vietnam

Are we obliged to be in Vietnam?

Cindy Curry: Yes, because they are fighting for freedom of people, but not if it's a political war which I think it is.

Susanne Navias: We are not obligated to stay there. We went in after the French got kicked out and they implied that they would like to become involved.

James Kirkaldy: No. It's hard to admit when you make a mistake, and then just call it quits, especially after all those people have been killed.

Mr. Oien: It depends upon the type of disruption. Disruption of the normal life of the academic community is not to be permitted.

Are students justified in opposing Vietnam?

Joanne Catanni: Yes, just as they are justified in opposing any social problem which exists in this country because of the guarantee of free speech and assembly in the constitution.

Susan Atwood: I'm not for protest in marching. It doesn't do any good. Authority looks down upon people who cannot communicate by means of talking.

Shades of Gandalf

Vietnam is not funny. No, I'm afraid that not even the slightest chuckle can be aroused when Vietnam is discussed. I'm sure the thousands of men who have died and the thousands who are still fighting there don't think it is very funny either. Nor do the cripples and amputees and vets back in the States. Nor the widows and parents and children of soldiers - dead. Nor the Vietnamese who have died or lost their homes to screaming B-52's. Nor the draft resisters who are in prison because they obeyed their consciences.

President Richard Nixon plays "My Wild Irish Rose" on his piano and asks us to wait. Every week we wait we usually lose a hundred or so men. Is Mr. Nixon a sadist? President Nguyen Van Thieu sits back and sees the white men from America fighting his war. Would he help us fight one?

What about You? Do You think it's funny? Have you done anything? Don't you think it's time you got off your ass and did something? October 15 is your chance. Vietnam is not funny.

TROOP WITHDRAWAL BOGS DOWN

(Continued from Page 1) Vietnam has touched the limit of its manpower capabilities. Civilian authorities claim that a new village development program is finally stimulating what they like to call rice-roots production. They can use many things that you don't need. Clothing, canned food, and money are some needed items. Look for future announcements for more information or see Rick Cruz.

Some improvement can be expected from re-equipment with modern weapons. But not speedily. The Army of Vietnam, or ARVN, is not expected to be fully re-equipped until June 30 of next year. The South Vietnamese Navy and Air Force have as their re-equipment target June 30, 1972. Moreover, Gen. Abrams points out that re-equipment is the least important feature of replacement. Far more important in his view are morale and leadership. "Every division in the Vietnamese army," he says, "is different. And the difference lies mainly in the quality of the commanding officer."

But improving morale and leadership is proceeding even slower than re-equipment. This is not only because learning takes time. There is also the political test applied to military command by President Nguyen Van Thieu.

President Thieu has his power base in the Vietnamese forces, and by no mere accident there is no military commander-in-chief. Gen. Thieu personally approves the appointments and transfers of all general officers. He moves at a pace that has caused some officials to baptize him "The Turtle." For instance, it took two years of American pressure at every level, including the presidential level, before he changed, only two weeks ago, the commanding generals of two notoriously ineffective divisions - the 5th and 18th divisions around Saigon.

Among American officials, to be sure, there is a general recognition that public opinion back home is fed up with the war, and particularly upset about high casualties. Still public opinion is usually mentioned here in disparaging terms - not as the matrix of American democracy, but as something shaped, or rather misshaped, by the press.

To be sure, no one here is prepared for direct resistance to specific orders on troop reduction. But if the Nixon Administration truly wants troop withdrawal as a meaningful policy, a policy to be used for the President in 1972 and against Democratic jibes in 1976, then Mr. Nixon is going to have to do a lot more than simply go through the motions of a routine winding-down. He is going to have to assert the logic of troop withdrawals in an outspoken, vigorous, and unambiguous way.
ALL WE ARE SAYING, IS GIVE PEACE A CHANCE!