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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 Vietnamese and the Vietnamese have been, tragically, complex and paradoxical.

American citizens view our actions in Vietnam as 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 policies toward the Vietnams is an out-growth of that.

BRIEFLY, American policies in Vietnam are subdivided as follows:

1. Anti-Vietryn-1940-45
2. Pro-Vietminh 1945-46
3. Non-Involvement 1946-50
4. Pro-French 1950-54
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 preparing 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) guerilla forces under the command of North Vietnam’s General Giap, with specially trained OSS instructors to train, supply, and lead the unarmed and untrained guerillas. 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 talk of peace...Yalta was no exception.

At Yalta, the “Trileftship” and the issue of colonial areas caused a great deal of hassle 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.

VI Day made a Vietnamese takeover in Hanoi possible.

SUCCESSFULLY HIDING THEIR COMMUNIST BACKGROUND, the Vietminh leaders managed to make it apparent not only to the populace of Indochina but to the Chinese and French that they had been recognized by the United States. In actuality, though, no official recognition had taken place. The Vietminh were proceeding with plans to form a new government 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, and Mr. Landon 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 dissident government. Thus Ho was left to face the returning French army. The first and last French-Indo Chinese 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.

BRIEFLY, American positions in Vietnam, or Indochina, can be seen by looking at the issues involved:

1. Anti-Vietminh
2. Pro-Vietminh
3. Non-Involvement
4. Pro-French
5. Economic Involvement
6. Direct and Full Involvement

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This reporter is not a veteran and a former strong destroyed, please put this article - and realize the horror of men American lives. My eyes have been opened. Perhaps your and all of us who are taking part about it every hour of every day killing men for an idea. are blind sheep. I won't dignify carefully investigating all the way to explain my position is with a democratic vehicle to just as Vietnamese as their or powers into two political partition was forced upon us? be Americans? Especially if the brothers in the South. If you Globe, Tuesday, August 26, of "bring them all home" the end result, and the price of terrorist tactics. The flow of Maj. Waite and Sgt. Oliver Noonan, and six other squad and platoon leaders have W'hat do we do with the the little things that made the A Company went back to Associated Press photographer leadership problem. Most of our preparing to move and asked: had hot food. They hadn't had him down the catered slope. killed in a helicopter crash with Shurtz said. "We've got a The Lieutenant said he was hadn't had mail. They hadn't loose formation, arid followed Lt. been waiting impatiently for A these men on the hl'll alld take . d b' The sergeant looked back enlisted men or are the NCO's mortanng an enemy pro mg at men. Ever since the crash been killed or wounded." ammunition supplies? Shall we war bearable. the war.

BRIDGEWATER- In case by Dave Wilson OUT

LETTERS TO EDITOR

I'd just like to write and express my views on the October 15th Moratorium. It seems that a great deal of talk and action has gone into the organization of this "Day of Peace," and there has been very little talk about any other views on the subject. Being a newspaper, you are giving a detailed account of all major issues confronting BOC, and so here are a few ideas of the Anti-Peace people, or at least what I can see of them.

1) This has been variously billed as a "reflection on this country's decisions on Vietnam's future," and a day of strike on some campuses. Yet, at the same time, numerous overtones seem to be cloaking this with a student dissatisfaction at school, student dissatisfaction with the Administration's national policies other than Vietnam.

2) The main rallying cry seems to be "I'm intermediate withdrawal," and a sort of "bring them all home," notion that seems a bit of wishful thinking being the end result. For it appears quite likely that a bloodbath, purge, or nation-wide slaughter would ensue if these desires are met, and all this in the name of peace.

Doesn't "peace" mean no hostilities on both sides, and a disengagement of all general agreement? Then the form of action that this Moratorium has been used for has little value as a "peace" effort, and merely serves to encourage a further increasing "liberation" of the country by the Vietcong. True peace comes through compromise, the power and, and eventual bi-lateral relations. It is not, cannot and will not be achieved by hol-hols-withdrawal of U.S. troops.

It might not be that little if any for any other consequence of the people of South Vietnam. I believe that until the free people of South Vietnam can stand on their own feet and fight the spread of Communism in their country, then we should remain to help them. They should not be abandoned and left to atrophy as the Communists who will never give them freedom, but will submit them to communism and other type of government. The flow of Communism must be stopped now, 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, Vietnam (AP) — "If our men refused to go — we cannot move out," Lt. Eugene Shurts reported after his battalion commander over a crackling field telephone.

"A" Company of the 119th Light Infantry Brigade's battle-worn 3rd Battalion had been ordered to move once more down the jungle's rocky slope of Nui Lon Mountain and into a deadly labyrinth of North Vietnam bunkers and trench lines.

For five days they had been holding out in this push. Each time they had been thrown back by the invisible enemy, the weight of the rain of bombs and artillery shells for the Americans to come close, then they would ring off with deadly crescendo. The battalion commander, Lt. James A. Baughman, said his men had been waiting impatiently for A Company to move out. Baughman had taken over the battalion after Lt. Eliot P. Howard was killed in a helicopter crash with Associated Press photographer Oliver Noonan, and six other men. Ever since the crash

Tuesday, the battalion had tried to make them quack the week

Sunday morning, Baughman was personally leading three of his men on a ground assault. He paired Shurts matter-of-factly told; the soldiers of A Company would not follow his orders.

"Repeat that please," the colonel continued without raising his voice.

"Have you told them what it means to disobey orders one and all?"

"I think they understand," the lieutenant replied, "but some of them simply had their doubts — or broke. There are boys here who have only 90 days remaining — and they said they would go in one piece. There is a person in the arc.

"You can't talk about enlisted men or the NCO's involved?" the colonel asked.

"That's the difficulty here," Shurts said. "We've got a leadership problem. Most of our squads and platoon leaders have been killed or wounded."

A Company at one point in the fight was down to 60 men — half of one. Disarmed.

Quietly the colonel told Shurts to talk to them again and he would give them some of their knowledge the bunkers were now empty — the enemy had moved. The next supervision of A Company today is to recover their dead. They have no reason to be afraid. Please hand a message for me: "Last chance. This is the last one we want to go.

The lieutenant came back a few minutes later. "They have gone, colonel, and I did not ask for them to be held back because they afraid that they stick together, even though some new arrivals.

The colonel told him: "leave these men on the hill and take our CP — Command Post — as an objective."

The lieutenant said he was preparing a message to headquarters. What do we do with the ammunition supplies? Shall we destroy them?

"Leave it with them," the colonel ordered.

"I told them," he said, "the men have for a pop talk and a kick in the butt," he said. They found the men bearded and exhausted, wearing baggy pants, uniforms ripped and caked with dirt.

They said they were sick of the endless battle in the torrid heat, the constant danger of enemy fire, and the mortar and enemy probing at night. They said they had not been too hard too. They hadn't had mail. They hadn't had hot food. They hadn't had mail. They hadn't had mail. They hadn't had mail. They hadn't had mail. They hadn't had mail. They hadn't had mail. They hadn't had mail. They hadn't had mail.

One of them yelled to me that his company had suffered too much. They were not going to go on," Blankenship said, "I answered that question: "You only have to move the men still on the move — and I lied to him — and he asked me, "What do we do?"

"Maybe they have got a little something more than what they have been told," I replied.

"Don't call us cowards, we are not cowards," the men shouted. They howled running toward Blankenship with his fists raised.

The regimental commander, Lt. Col. Blankenship and his men were stirred. They picked up their rifles, fell into a loose formation, and walked down the bomb-scarred ridge line to where the company commander waited.

The sergeant looked back and said, "Let's go out and Company came stirr. Blanks up his gun down the catered slope. Company went back to the war.
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CAMPUS INTERVIEWS...
Query on Vietnam

Are we obliged to be in Vietnam?

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.

Offensive of 1968 the enemy exultantly, "and we can wrap up alienated the great bulk of the population." Give us three more years, they said.

Robert Whitney: No, I am opposed to American Imperialism.

Bob Whitney: No, I am opposed to American Imperialism.

The love of the cross orphanage in Tan Binh Vietnam needs your support. The more than 200 children there have been receiving aid from our government forces near by.

Stuart Duffield: No, we are not profiting from the freedom of people, but not if it's a political war which I think it is.

Are students justified in opposing Vietnam?

Cindy Curry: Yes, because they are fighting for freedom of people.

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.

James Kircaldy: 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.

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

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

Their affection for the people there, their desire for the war to end, their hatred of the enemy.

WON'T YOU HELP?

The 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 the civilians and refugees and vets back in the States. Nor the millions who are fighting there don't think it is funny.

Sue 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

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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 democracy.

The South Vietnamese forces, to begin with, are in poor shape. Only very few units notably the First Division up near the Demilitarized Zone actually do front-line duty against the enemy. For the rest, desertion is high, night actions are scarce, and long-range patrolling, which is essential to avoid surprises, is almost non-existent.

Some improvement can be expected from re-equipping 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-equipping target June 30, 1972.

Moreover, Gen. Abrams points out that re-equipping 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-equipping. 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 15th 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 sister of American democracy, but as something shaped, or rather mishapen, 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.

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ALL WE ARE SAYING, IS GIVE PEACE A CHANCE!