

# The Vietnamese People Are Not Our Enemies



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# Joint Treaty of Peace Between the U.S. and Vietnamese People

**B**e it known that the American and Vietnamese people are not enemies. The war is carried out in the names of the people of the United States and South Vietnam but without our consent. It destroys the land and people of Vietnam. It drains America of its resources, its youth and its honor.

We hereby agree to end the war on the following terms so that both peoples can live under the joy of independence and can devote themselves to building a society based on human equality and respect for the earth.

1. The Americans agree to immediate and total withdrawal from Vietnam and publicly to set the date by which all American forces will be removed.

The Vietnamese pledge that as soon as the U.S. government publicly sets a date for total withdrawal:

2. They will enter discussions to secure the release of all American prisoners, including pilots captured while bombing North Vietnam.

3. There will be an immediate cease-fire between U.S. forces and those led by the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam.

4. They will enter discussions of the procedures to guarantee the safety of all withdrawing troops.

5. The Americans pledge to end the imposition of Thieu-Ky-Khiem on the people of South Vietnam in order to insure their right to self-determination and so that all political prisoners can be released.

6. The Vietnamese pledge to form a provisional coalition government to organize democratic elections. All parties agree to respect the results of elections in which all South Vietnamese can participate freely without the presence of any foreign troops.

7. The South Vietnamese pledge to enter discussion of procedures to guarantee the safety and political freedom of those South Vietnamese who have collaborated with the U.S. or with the U.S.-supported regime.

8. The Americans and Vietnamese agree to respect the independence, peace and neutrality of Laos and Cambodia in accord with the 1954 and 1962 Geneva conventions and not to interfere in the internal affairs of these two countries.

9. Upon these points of agreement, we pledge to end the war and resolve all other questions in the spirit of self-determination and mutual respect for the independence and political freedom of the people of Vietnam and the United States.

By ratifying the agreement, we pledge to take whatever actions are appropriate to implement the terms of this joint Treaty and to insure its acceptance by the government of the United States.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

# A Declaration of Independence from the Vietnam War

**I**T IS JUST FOUR YEARS since Martin Luther King, Jr., issued his famous Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam (see RAMPARTS, May 1967). Now that peace is fashionable, it is perhaps difficult to recall the immense pressures brought to bear to make him remain "a civil rights leader," to keep him from getting involved with an anti-war movement not yet respectable. Now that the rationales supporting this war have been unmasked as bankrupt and morally imbecilic, it is perhaps hard to understand that King was censured for saying, "It should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war."

But even King was a latecomer to the revulsion. And if anyone thought that the repercussions of what was going on in Vietnam would not come home in waves of gathering strength, the year following his Declaration put an end to such illusions. The Tet offensive by the NLF, the student rebellions which swept American campuses that spring and culminated in the Battle of Chicago at the Democratic Convention—all made the words of the black preacher, and of those who had preceded and followed him, starkly prophetic. Soon not only liberal Democrats—aided by their electoral defeat—but also the Republican Administration—elect began to get the message: the Vietnam war, which superior technology and geographical immunity seemed to insure would devastate only the victims, was now a grotesque liability to the executioners as well. As a result, de-escalation, "Vietnamization" and withdrawal were quickly held out to a people dizzy and brutalized by events.

In the past two years, those who predicted (and by this time it took little prescience to do so) that the rhetoric of withdrawal would be no less deadly than the rhetoric of escalation in the past; that it would involve at best a pseudo-event and a staged optical illusion—these people have been vindicated. In the Nixon era, escalation has been the order of the day—although less arrogantly implemented than before; the total fire-power used to "cleanse" the Indochina peninsula has steadily increased, and the war has spread like a khaki malignancy to two neutral countries, Laos and Cambodia. Now a point in the conflict has been

reached where the non-nuclear options available to Washington—short of the actual withdrawal that has never been a serious option—are perilously limited. And meanwhile on the home front the chaos grows—rising inflation and unemployment, open assaults on civil rights and other gains of the previous decades, and a growing wave of political violence and repression from above making it clear, as King and others had prophesied, that the destinies of Vietnam and America are inextricably linked.

It is in this context that an initiative has been taken by American students to sign a peace treaty with the Vietnamese and mount a domestic campaign to compel an end to the war. The Joint Treaty of Peace Between the U.S. and Vietnamese Peoples was signed in Hanoi by North and South Vietnamese students and an American delegation led by David Ifshin, president of the National Student Association. Already the treaty has been ratified by the 131 organizations and collectives of the National Coalition Against War, Racism and Repression and by 2000 delegates of the Student and Youth Conference on a People's Peace which met in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on February 5-7, and which also endorsed a major anti-war action in Washington for May 1. The treaty is here reprinted to gain wider circulation.

The movement for a separate peace comes at a time when, according to a recent Harris poll, 73 per cent of the people in this country favor withdrawal of American troops; when the consequences of the widening war have never been more damaging. Never before has the time been riper nor the necessity so clear for a mass declaration of independence from the war in Indochina and from the whole system of corporate and military empire which stares like a death's head in the face of our future.

This treaty will not allow us to shut out the images of genocide that will stain American history forever; but it will tell the Vietnamese that it is not the American people who consider them enemies, and it could be the beginning of a mass movement that will finally get the U.S. out of Southeast Asia.

Sign the treaty and return it to People's Peace Treaty, P.O. Box 203, Old Chelsea Station, New York, New York 10011.  
—THE EDITORS



# Giving Peace a Chance

"IN TWO DAYS YOU'LL BE LEAVING for North Vietnam," the telephone voice from Washington told me, and immediately I was filled with a mixture of excitement and concern. I hadn't expected to leave for another three weeks, and just then I was involved in organizing the most critical moments of the campaign to defend the Seattle 8. Even so, I had no hesitation in answering that I would be ready—for I was to be one of the 15 Americans who would negotiate a peace treaty with the Vietnamese.

I met the other delegates on a misty December afternoon in New York where we boarded a Russian Aeroflot jet, which now provides direct flights to Hanoi. The flight in the small turbo-prop took 24 hours, with stops in Moscow, Tashkent, Karachi, Calcutta and Vientiane, Laos, before setting down in North Vietnam.

Driving into Hanoi from the airport, we could see the bomb damage from American aircraft: gaping holes and jagged walks would suddenly appear along a row of houses. On one trip into the provinces during our two-week stay we saw the churches, schools and hospitals that U.S. bombers had homed in on as "military" targets. Yet despite the intensity of the bombing in what were obviously civilian centers, the Vietnamese told us proudly of their increased productivity, higher crop yields and expanded schools. Symbolic of their determination to turn adversity into hope, they had transformed empty bomb craters into fish-breeding ponds.

The Vietnamese and Laotians also presented our delegation with rings and bracelets made of the wreckage of downed U.S. bombers, a further instance of their effort to bring forth beauty from the womb of destruction and devastation.

Besides the undaunted spirit and resourcefulness of the Vietnamese, I was struck most by their humanity—I can think of no other word for it. We met one afternoon with Prime Minister Pham Van Dong. He spoke to us about the suffering of his people and also about the hardships of Americans who have lost husbands and sons in the war and are suffering economic difficulties. He admonished us to "remember that we are all human beings—remember that always."

Two days after we visited Pham Van Dong, we met with the War Crimes Commission. We were shown the highly developed fragmentation bombs used by the American Air

Force to penetrate air-raid shelters and then explode. Some have pellets shaped like barbed spears; others are so minute that they penetrate far into the victim and cannot be removed. We saw a young girl who had been hit inside a shelter. Her body was riddled with pellets that could not be removed and caused such intense pain that even a draft of air caused her agony. We saw a man whose face had been totally burned away by napalm, and a young boy whose body wore the scars of napalm and who also had an ugly wound about his throat where a GI had tried to decapitate him. But the most heart-wrenching victims were the deformed children born to mothers who had lived in the chemically contaminated areas of the South. Generations of Vietnamese will be the innocent victims of the "biocidal" war being waged against their parents.

As I sat through these sessions, I became numb from the horror of the crimes, and fought against the realization that this had really happened, that it was happening now.

Then, on the second day of the sessions, I received a telegram from the defendants in the Seattle Conspiracy case telling me that their trial had been stopped and they were being thrown in jail. My mind drifted back to the scene at home, to the political repression, to the daily oppression of blacks, Indians and chicanos, and Pham Van Dong's words suddenly took on new meaning: "Remember, we are all human beings."

WHEN IT CAME TIME for us to meet with the Vietnamese students to discuss common terms for peace, a special delegation from the liberated zones in the South arrived. Already we had had several enthusiastic responses in the North, but we did not expect the even greater outpouring of natural warmth towards us from the South Vietnamese students.

The leader of the delegation was Nguyen Thi Chau, a woman who had been tortured in prison in the South for four years. The fact that the leader was a woman indicates the high status women have in Vietnam. (Before their socialist revolution, the Vietnamese women had formed several feminist groups, many of which saw the male domination of feudal society as their key enemy. Often these latter groups were used by the French to subvert the anti-imperialist women's organizations which have now united women into a National Women's Union.) Women hold im-

by Theirrie Cook

portant positions in production, administration and in the home. One illustration of the government's effort to change the culture's traditional treatment of women was a billboard we saw at the entrance to a large textile mill in Hanoi. On it were birth control information and statements extolling the virtues of having female children. Before the revolution, female children had been regarded as handicaps, and they were often sold into concubinage.

In addition to the delegation from the liberated zone, we met with the North Vietnamese Students Union. Doug Hostetter, who had been able to sneak into the South, arrived with a declaration of peace from the National Student Union of South Vietnam. Doug had talked with the leader of the Saigon Student Union, who had been released from Thieu's prisons in August after being near death from torture. Doug also brought reports of a new political force of students', Buddhists' and women's groups being formed in the South calling for the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and an end to the Thieu-Ky regime.

Our sense of urgency was increased by the recent bombing of the North. While we were there, the North Vietnamese government issued a call to prepare for an invasion, after U.S. Defense Secretary Laird made his statement about retaliation for firing on "reconnaissance" planes. Overnight the bomb shelters had been cleaned out, trucks with supplies went rumbling through the streets, and people rode by on bicycles, guns on their backs.

In this tense atmosphere, we met with the students and came to an agreement on common terms of peace. We were not at war with each other. The Vietnamese make a clear distinction between the people of the United States and its government. We were the people. We were "progressive" Americans whom children ran up to see and smile at in the streets of Hanoi. We were their friends. In this spirit, many of us in tears, we all signed the People's Peace Treaty.

**T**HE TREATY IS NOT a gimmick. Signing the treaty itself is an act of non-violent civil disobedience, since the Logan Act prohibits citizens to negotiate with a foreign country. In fact, after we returned, J. Edgar Hoover announced he had uncovered a "plot" to negotiate a peace treaty with the Vietnamese. The National Coalition, which has now changed its name to the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice, is not only beginning a campaign for ratification but is also calling for non-violent civil disobedience nationally.

After the People's Coalition conference in Chicago, I went to the Winter Soldier Investigation in Detroit where veterans from Vietnam testified about the war crimes they and others had committed as part of the U.S. policy in Vietnam. Afterwards, the vets went across the border into Canada where they met with Vietnamese peasants who were victims of the crimes. The vets brought along a copy of the treaty as a symbol of the peace that existed between them. What followed is what the treaty is all about—some American people and some Vietnamese people declared peace. One vet remarked after signing the treaty that more progress had been made towards peace in those moments than

in four years at the Paris peace talks.

One of the original plans for the Peace Treaty was to be its presentation at a National Youth Conference. A conference was held February 5, 6 and 7 in Ann Arbor, specifically to endorse the document and to plan a spring anti-war program. The treaty was overwhelmingly embraced by the 2000 people there. Students and young people poured onto the campus of the University of Michigan, not only to adopt the treaty but also to call for national non-violent civil disobedience across the country. Actions are to be focused in Washington, D.C., beginning May 1 and sustained as long as possible to raise the domestic cost of the war.

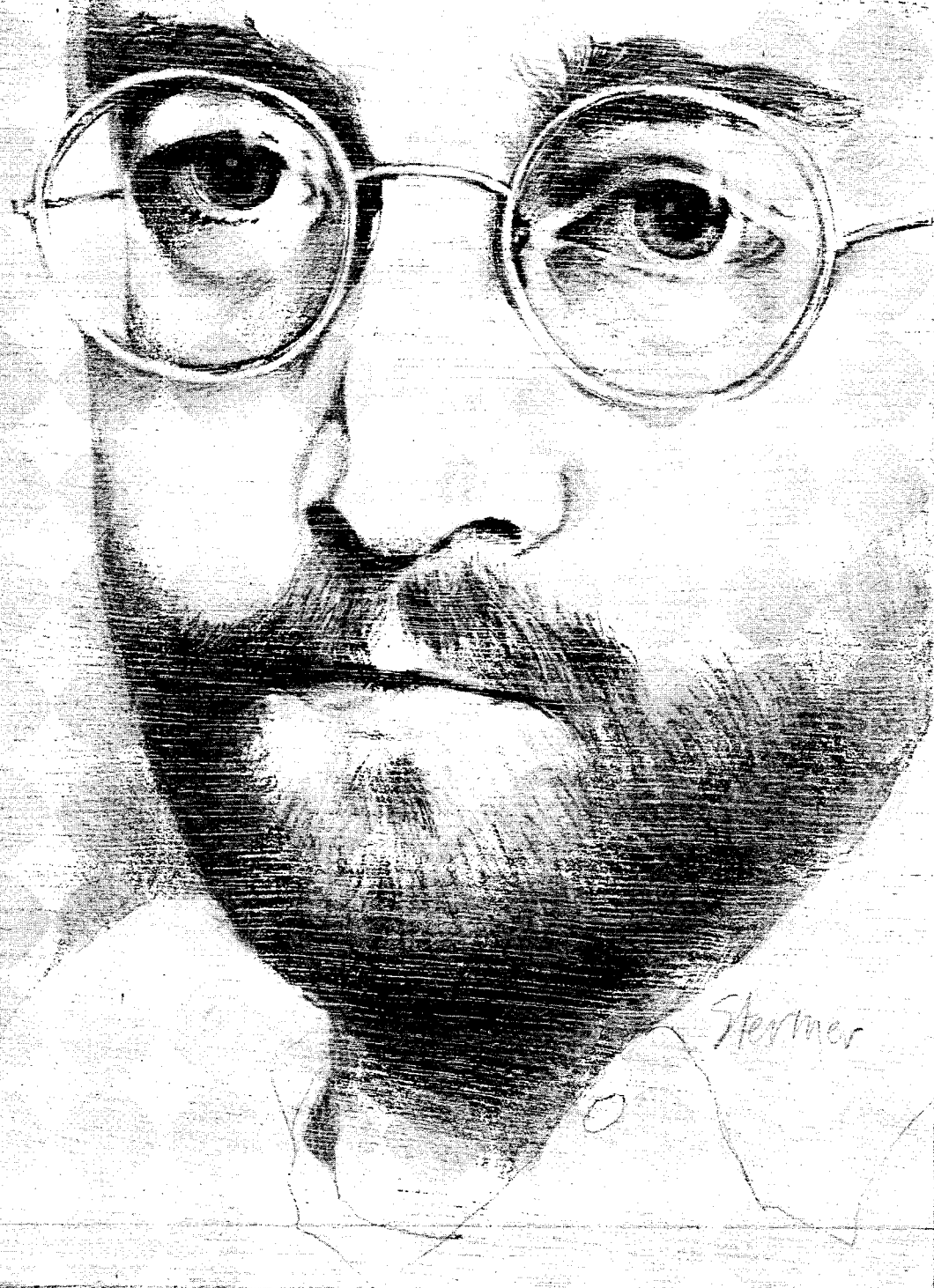
For months people have been declaring that "the Movement is dead." Anyone who was at the conference in Ann Arbor would know that the Movement is not dead. Opposition to the war is rising in this country; what has to be found is a way to express it. Many of the people at the conference came specifically to find out what could be done, what programs they could develop on their campuses and in their communities. Programs organized around implementing the treaty range from tax resistance, boycotts and strikes to non-violent civil disobedience: the object is to take the community, the school or the job out of the war. The potential is great for the treaty program not only to unify broad sectors of the Movement, but also to unify all Americans who favor immediate and total withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam.

**F**ROM THE PEOPLE who attended the Coalition Conference in Chicago to the youth who attended the Ann Arbor Conference to the vets who signed the treaty amidst tears and joy with the Vietnamese—the people of America have begun to make the peace. We are saying that if the government will not stop the war, we will stop the government—beginning May 1 in Washington, D.C., and across the country—by engaging in non-violent civil disobedience. By taking a risk ourselves and not just by marching.

When I was in Vietnam, the Vietnamese repeatedly emphasized how important our response to the Cambodian invasion was. With the political situation developing into a possible crisis for the Thieu government, and the recent desperate invasion of Laos, it becomes more imperative that we act now, in this country, to create a situation that will force Nixon's hand, and hasten U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.

Since I have returned from Vietnam, I have a stronger sense of urgency and of outrage. I will never forget the man without a face nor the love and strength the Vietnamese people showed me. I understand why the Vietnamese are winning, but I have also seen the magnitude of their suffering. Every moment the war continues we all die inside, little by little. The Vietnamese say they turn their anger into useful work to fight for their country and rebuild it. Now is the time for us to act, not mourn or suffocate in guilt. "We are all human beings." We, the people, must make the peace.

*Theirrie Cook is a member of the Seattle Liberation Front as well as a delegate to the People's Peace Treaty in Vietnam.*



*A working class hero is something to be*

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