

[early 1965]

[reprint]

WHAT GIVES IN VIETNAM?

Q. The U.S. Government says that its air raids above the 17th parallel were 'reprisals' for North Vietnamese attacks on U.S. military forces. Is there any truth to that assertion?

A. None. Immediately after the first raids the New York Times (2/8) pointed out that the U.S. defeat at Pleiku had been inflicted by a relatively small National Liberation Front (NLF) force, helped by the local population and using captured, U.S. manufactured, mortars. Moreover, as the Times also spelled out, the raids were staged from an extraordinary Task Force which had been assembled and ready for action before the so-called 'provocation.'

Q. Were these raids, then, a military measure designed to cut off Northern aid to the NLF?

A. No. While the North Vietnamese government, to its credit, has indeed given aid to the NLF, that aid cannot be held decisive in the guerilla struggle in South Vietnam. The soldiers of the NLF are natives of the Southern half of their country, they are mainly armed with captured weapons, and their greatest strength lies in the support of the South Vietnamese peasantry. Even the U.S. military admits that the majority of the Southern population lives in areas governed by the NLF. Bombings in the North in no way alter these facts, and they won't even stop the aid that is still getting through.

Q. What, then, is the real reason for these raids?

A. As we saw, the U.S. government falsely claims that it is trying to make the North Vietnamese stop 'intervening' in South Vietnam. The reality is the exact opposite: they want to force Hanoi to intervene in restraint of the NLF. The basic fact which has now been spelled out in the headlines is that the U.S. military's dirty little war in Vietnam is already lost. The South Vietnamese 'army' is now effective only to overthrow fictitious Saigon 'governments.' The U.S. forces in Vietnam are confronted with the prospect of destruction in a series of local Dienbienphus. Unless the NLF can somehow be persuaded not to exploit its advantage the U.S. position will soon collapse.

Q. But how can Johnson hope that these raids will have that effect?

A. These raids are intended to make 'credible' a deadly threat: the threat to extend the war, to level the cities of North Vietnam, to send the U.S. Army into Vietnam on a Korea scale, to attack China. The U.S. government is implying that there are no limits to the crimes against humanity that it will commit in order to retain its imperialist grip over Southeast Asia. This is what the Washington cliché 'negotiate from positions of strength' actually means. The only 'position of strength' left to them is the threat of thermonuclear war. We are all, personally, being threatened by these people.

HANDS OFF VIET NAM!

Q. What is the alternative?

A. The U.S. Army must get out of Vietnam, must get out unconditionally, must get out now. The U.S. government has nothing legitimate to say about the future of Vietnam, it has no right to impose 'neutralization' as a condition for withdrawal, it has no right to 'negotiate' the life and death of Asians. Hands off Vietnam! Only this course is in the interest of American working people and our Vietnamese brothers.

The following is the text of a cablegram to Ho Chi Minh regarding the air strikes by the U.S. against North Vietnamese targets:

'PRESIDENT HO CHI MINH,
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM
HANOI, NORTH VIET NAM:

SUNDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 1965

SPARTACIST IN FULLEST SOLIDARITY WITH THE DEFENSE OF YOUR COUNTRY
AGAINST ATTACK BY UNITED STATES IMPERIALISM. HEROIC STRUGGLE OF
VIETNAMESE WORKING PEOPLE FURTHERS THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

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