

An Indochinese Conference in Vancouver

by Kathleen Gough Aberle

An important conference took place at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, B.C., Canada, on April 1st to 6th. Six Indochinese delegates met about 600 women from Voice of Women, Women Strike for Peace, Third World, and Women's Liberation groups of western North America. The purpose of the conference was "to meet and talk in order to get a better understanding and strengthen our solidarity so as to put an early end to the war, and to give information to Canadian and U.S. friends on the situation in Indochina."¹ Third World delegates, who numbered about 300, came from Black, Chicano, Asian, and Native Amer-

The Indochinese Delegates

From the Women's Union of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam came Vo Thi The, aged 50, a professor of Vietnamese literature and history, and Nguyen Thi Xiem (40), a medical researcher and obstetrician at the Institute for the Protection of Mothers and Newborn Babies in Hanoi. Delegates of the Women's Union of South Vietnam were Phan Minh Hien (31), a teacher, and Dinh Thi Huong (46), a housewife. From Laos came two members of the Executive Committee of the Lao Women's Union, Khampheng Boupha (47) and Khemphet Pholsena (29), both



ican and Canadian groups. The Indochinese also talked to G.I. wives, veterans, deserters, and draft resisters, and held public meetings with Canadian citizens.² A similar conference followed in Toronto (see The Guardian, New York, April 17, page 5).

Because of disunity and, to some extent, differences of interest among them, the three sponsoring groups held separate conferences. Voice of Women (Canada) and Women Strike for Peace (U.S.A.) met on April 1st; Third World women, on April 3rd and 4th; and Women's Liberation groups, on April 5th and 6th.³

teachers. Three men worked nobly as interpreters: Nguyen Tri (46), a professor of French at the University of Hanoi, Trinh Van Anh (33) from South Vietnam, and Souban Srithirath (34) from Laos. Although invited delegates from Cambodia could not be present, Cambodian news and statements of solidarity reached us from Prince Sihanouk and from speeches of the attending delegates. A spirit of unity, optimism, and determination on the part of the Indochinese peoples permeated the conference.

Most remarkable about these women were their gentle dignity, self command, and deep concern for others, both individually and as nations. They laughed often

with the women they met, hugged them when they felt common feelings, wept a little as they heard of each other's sufferings, and comforted us when (as too often happened) we ran late with the program or failed with the conference arrangements. Although their competence and dedication awed us, we felt that we, too, might cope better in future, as women and as citizens, for having met them.

Personal Stories

Before beginning their discussions of political and military matters, each delegate gave us a short life-history.

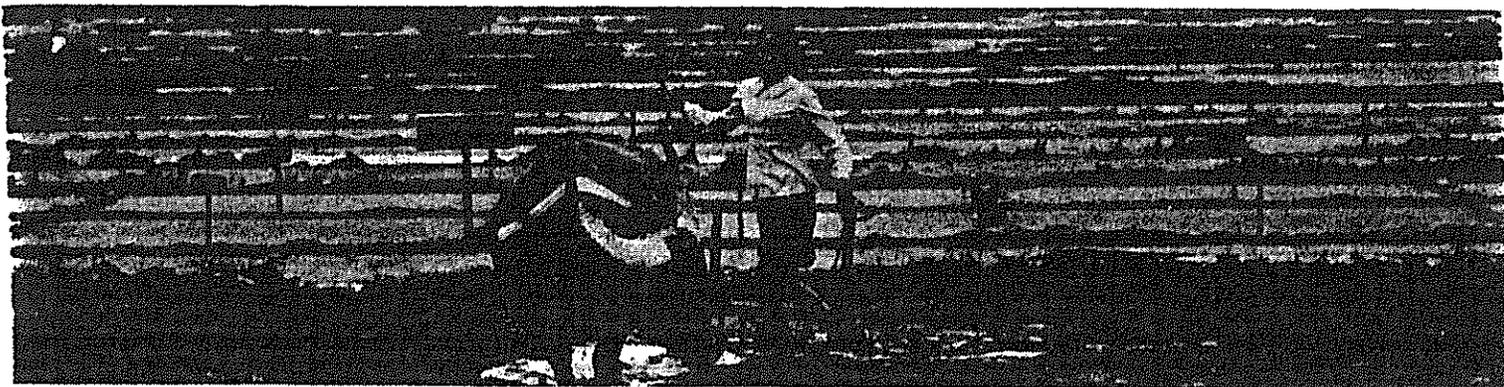
VO THI THE, an impressive woman who frequently led discussions, lives now in Hanoi but comes from Hue, the capital of Central Vietnam.

"My father was an old-style intellec-

aries and some are now politicians.

"When the French invaded again, they entered Saigon. One of my two older brothers joined the army and went south. He gave his life in the first battle. My other older brother decided to join when he heard of his death. He, too, was killed.

"I still remember the day we received the news of my second brother's death. Some days after the battle my mother met the soldiers coming from the front, to ask about her son. They tried to avoid her; they didn't want to make her sad, so they drove away. She ran about a third of a mile after the car. Then she sat down on the grass and realized he was dead. My parents and my whole family suffered a great deal, and my heart was aching. After reflecting on her losses, my mother decided to send her other son to fight.



ual, learned in Chinese. He didn't wish to become a mandarin and serve in feudal and colonial conditions, so he stayed at home. We children received a patriotic spirit from him. We saw the difference in living conditions between the Vietnamese and the French colonialists. We hated the French for invading our country and oppressing our people.

"In 1945 two million Vietnamese died of hunger. The French colonialists and the Japanese fascists burned our stocks of rice. My whole family took part in the August revolution. I was a teacher then at Hue university, but I joined the Women's Union for National Salvation and got my students' support through my subject. Many of them became revolution-

"In February, 1946, the French invaded Hue, destroyed our village, and burned our house. They took my father and exposed him in the sun until he became ill. As a result, he died three months later. This strengthened our hatred of the enemy and our urge to fight. In Vietnam, the family's hatred of the enemy is closely interrelated with that of the nation...

"Because of my work in the Women's Union I had to leave my family in 1950, and have not seen my mother since. Since the U.S. puppets divided our country, we have been fighting to re-unify it and our families. We turn our suffering into hatred, so as to fight...

"My mother and some of my brothers and sisters are still in South Vietnam. During the uprising there in the spring of 1968, the enemy bombed and strafed Hue and destroyed the area where we used to live. Since then, we have received no news from them.

"I have two children aged 17 and 13. They are in school in forests and my husband is in the army, so we rarely see each other. Youth of that age are very eager to join the army. To gain permission they have to reach a certain weight, but many 16-year olds put rocks in their pockets to get accepted...

"Thousands of women who were born in South Vietnam are now living in the North. They long for the place of their youth and childhood; naturally, that is the place that seems most beautiful to everyone. And so these women name their babies after a mountain, a river, or

laughing, woman. In addition to her work in obstetrics, she does research on the treatment of injuries from toxic chemicals, fragmentation bombs, napalm, and diseases introduced to South Vietnam by U.S. troops. Her patients are brought from South Vietnam to Hanoi for treatment. Xiem told of women's uteruses, bowels and urinary tracts perforated by pellet bombs when they were pregnant, causing miscarriages of malformed births, and of the high frequency of miscarriages and deformed babies resulting from toxic gases and chemical defoliants.

Born into a family of 12 near Hue, Xiem entered school only at 15, after the August revolution.

"My village had one year of peace. Then the French colonialists came and occupied our province for a second time. My father, two brothers, and some of my sisters joined the army. My mother and



some other place near their old village. I gave one of my children a name that means "We are thinking of you South Vietnam!" The other I named after a river that flowed before our house-- we called it "Perfume River". Because so many families are divided in this way, the question of reunification is emotional as well as political. Vietnam is one, her people are one.

"That is why we ask you to struggle in your country to have the U.S. troops withdrawn; in order that the people of Vietnam may once again meet their dear ones."

NGUYEN THI XIEM is a slight, often

we younger children had to disperse into the mountains. Living deep in the jungle, four of my brothers and sisters died of malaria. I joined the Pioneers, a youth organization, and continued my studies." Vo Thi The at one time was her teacher.

The French were defeated and the Geneva Agreements of 1954 were signed two years after Xiem had become a teacher and joined the Women's Union for National Salvation. With the "regroupment" of the Viet Minh, "My father, two of my brothers and I went to the North. My mother and her other children remained in South Vietnam. In 1957 I received one letter saying my mother and the others had to move to different provinces be-

cause our whole village had been destroyed by bombs and shells. I have not heard of them since then."

If living, Xiem's two younger brothers are now of military age. "I don't know whether their minds are clear enough to join the liberation forces, or whether they follow a wrong path and work for the puppet regime. I only hope they are wise enough to serve their country."

"With the care of our people", Xiem entered Hanoi university, graduated from medical college in 1959, and later studied for two years abroad. The Institute for the Protection of Mothers and Newborn Babies, where she now works, was built with the aid of Women's Unions throughout the world. She hopes it will receive support in future from North American women's anti-war and liberation groups.



Xiem says she is happy to live in North Vietnam because it is a socialist country. "I consider it a great honor to protect the health of mothers and babies in our country. To show gratitude to our kith and kin in South Vietnam, who still have to spill their blood to fight the aggressors, I feel deeply that I must do my job well, raise my political consciousness, and improve my educational and technical work. This will help to provide good conditions for people to work in production as well as fighting, to bring peace for every family in Vietnam."

PHAN MINH HIEN, of South Vietnam,

weighs 86 lbs. To reach North Vietnam in order to depart for Canada, she walked for three months through jungles carrying 44 lbs. of luggage.

"The village where I was born is on the bank of a river. I'm fond of flowers and as a child, I used to grow them around my home. We had a lot of fruit trees, too.

"The war reached us in 1947. We started fighting, and since then my village has not known one day of peace.

"My mother died early and my father sacrificed himself in the first resistance war. I had two younger sisters, but they died too because of war conditions. My grandfather and many uncles and aunts remained, but I decided to join the resistance. When my grandfather died I couldn't go home because my village was encircled by the enemy."

Hien is married and has three children. Because her husband is in the army, he had to leave her immediately after the wedding. She saw him again four years later—for half an hour. They have been separated most of the time for the past ten years. Hien had to leave her first child with a friend when he was 13 months old, and because of her work, she is now separated from all her children.

"Like other mothers I worry about my children—their food and so on. And every time I meet my children they ask me, 'When are you leaving, mother?' Sometimes they make me very sorry, painful, because they say, 'We don't know whether we shall see you again or not.'

That is why I always leave when they are sleeping. But our children are responsible to the Fatherland, and know why their parents leave them." Moreover, Hien knows that she is lucky. After all, her husband and children are alive, and so, she says, things seem to go "quite well."

After high school in the jungle, Hien attended university evening classes for two years. She chose to study chemistry so that she could help to recondition the soil that has been ruined by the war, and to plant fruit trees again.

"While working as a teacher I receive good care and affection from the villagers. We don't have a salary. When we work in the jungle, we get from 9 to 18 kilograms (about 20 to 40 lbs.) of rice or manioc a month. The villagers share everything with us -- even medicine tablets when we fall ill.



"I only wish the U.S. troops would get out of Vietnam, so the suffering of Vietnamese, as well as Americans, will be ended. I'd like to rebuild my village, and grow flowers around my home."

DINH THI HUONG's story is less pleasant. A widow, she comes from a family of weavers in a village in Binh Dinh province. A shell killed her younger sister and four other women, together with her niece, aged four. Huong's daughter of 19 has been imprisoned four times since the age of 13. The first time she was held for 11 months, found not guilty, and released. The second time, 1968, she was detained in the district capital, but the NLF liberated the town and set her free. The third time

she was held for four months and was tortured many times, but found not guilty and released. She was last arrested in 1970. Huong has not heard from her since then.

Huong herself was imprisoned from November 1955 to April 1961. She went through eight of South Vietnam's most infamous jails.

"I was first detained in Quinhon prison for 16 months. I was tortured. They pushed pins into my finger tips and hammered them with a stick, so I felt great pain. I was tortured by electricity. They applied electrodes to my ears, fingers, nipples and genitals. Once they tortured me with electricity until I fell unconscious. They left me in the torture room until the afternoon when I regained consciousness; then they sent me back to the cell.

"Another torture was the water torture. They forced soap mixed with lye and water into my stomach until I fell unconscious. They used their shoes to trample on my belly until the water was out. In that way I vomited blood. They tied my hands behind my back and hung me from the ceiling. After about 50 minutes, I fell unconscious and relieved myself. All my body was black and blue. With this torture, I was paralysed for six months. I could not feed myself or put on my clothes.

"I was held in a narrow cell, 3 metres long and 1 1/2 metres wide (about 10 feet by 5). In this cell they detained 15 people, or sometimes up to 32. Men and women lived in the same cell;

they were not allowed to have their clothing. In such a narrow cell we had to eat and make water; we relieved ourselves in a small pail which we hung from the ceiling. We had room only to stand.

"During my imprisonment I was not allowed to take a bath. I had very long hair before I was arrested. Because of the hard imprisonment, all my hair was soaked with blood and other things, and there were lice. Even when I wanted to cut my hair, they didn't let me. I was given rice with salt, or sometimes only rice. And from time to time they did not give me food for three days running.

"...In this cell, every day some prisoners died. Once five prisoners died at about five o'clock in the morning; they were not brought out until eleven o'clock. Most of the people in my cell died; just a few, including me, remained



alive. We called the prison there a 'Hell on Earth'. I don't know why, but the healthier the people, the sooner they would die. After five days even healthy men could not bear the torture longer. I myself fell unconscious many times; my friends marvelled that I was still alive.

"Then I was sent to the prison at Con Son; it's a small island. There I spent 30 months in an underground cave. The cave was 2 1/2 by 1 1/2 metres; its height was 2 1/2 metres (8' 4"). The cave was painted black; there were only two small holes. In it from 15 to 22 prisoners were detained. We ate, made water, and relieved ourselves there; once a week we were allowed to clean out

the latrine pail. Our food was rotten rice with decayed fish, or only rice. Every 24 hours, I received a quarter of a litre of water. Every two months, I was allowed to bathe.

"At Con Son I saw 98 prisoners. Three were women of 50 to 55, two had little children, and one gave birth in prison. Because she had no money to give birth, this woman cut her hair and sold it for 200 piastres to the soldiers' wives, for her delivery.

"Then I was brought to the mainland, to the prison called Thuduc. There I spent 17 months. I was in a small, narrow cell in Thuduc, 1.40 metres by 80 centimetres. I could not lie down freely, yet still they shackled my hands. In this prison I was allowed one piece of clothing, but no baths. And you know, when the women prisoners menstruated, they were not allowed to have a change

of clothing.

"After this I was sent to another prison, Phu Loi, where they kept me 15 months. Here I was tortured again with electricity, water and beating, exactly as I had been at Quinhon... In the cell they tied my hands and legs, and gagged me with a piece of iron. From time to time they tortured me with water, right there in the cell, and they beat me any time they felt inclined.

"Before I was released they sent me to a ward with 500 other women prisoners. There were three old women - 70, 73 and 75. The last two were nuns, suspected of participating in the peace movement.

There were also 16 children, from newborn babies up to five years old. These children had many diseases; they were only skin and bones. Many of these children died for lack of air...

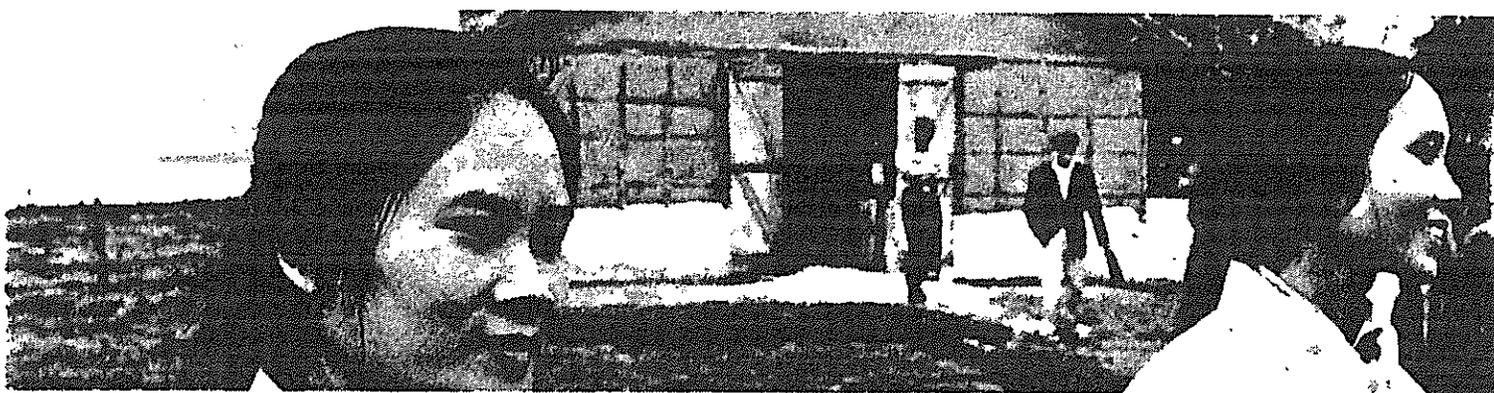
"In April, 1961, I was found Not Guilty and at last released. Before my arrest I weighed 49 kilograms (106 lbs.), but after it, only 34 kilograms (75 lbs.). They had tortured me because they thought I was a member of an anti-U.S. patriotic organization, but in fact I was quite innocent. During my imprisonment they commanded me to salute the Saigon flag and shout slogans in favor of the Saigon regime. But I refused to do so simply because, since there was such a regime and such a flag, women of South Vietnam were suffering much...

"On release, I was so sick that from time to time I vomited blood and was more or less half dead and paralyzed. They re-

was chosen to visit Canada as an exemplary fighter for her people.)

"Dear friends, I would like to say a few words about imprisonment in South Vietnam since Mr. Nixon came to power. I cannot tell you every torture the women prisoners have to suffer - only in Con Son, Cay Dua, and Thuduc.

"In the past two years the U.S. and the puppets have arrested and persecuted many patriots. They consider it a means to carry out 'Vietnamization' of the war. For example, Cay Dua prison is on a small island in South Vietnam. In 1967 there were only 2 sections and 2,000 prisoners, but in October 1970 there were 10 sections with 28,000 prisoners. The prison has been fenced with three barbed wire fences, together with electric wires and minefields. There are ten watchtowers with machine-guns round the prison. Five battalions of



leased me in the hope that they could threaten and intimidate the people of my village. Instead my people cared for me, and I have been through many hospitals. I feel better now, but my health is not recovered as before.

"Before my arrest I was in fact a mere civilian, a housewife. But after my imprisonment I felt that I should do something to contribute to the struggle of my people. I have had many sufferings, like other women in South Vietnam. So I joined my people, to fight the Americans and the puppets in Saigon." (Since then, Dinh Thi Huong has been elected to Women's Union committees of her village, province, and zone. She

puppet troops and four battalions of so-called 'civilian guards' have been mobilized to supervise the prisoners.

"Here in Cay Dua prison, the most barbarous tortures have been done. Sometimes they burn the prisoner's belly with petrol. They slice the prisoners' flesh. They put the prisoners into bags and fill the bags with sand and expose them in the hot sun till they die. They tie the prisoners and throw them in the sea. More barbarous still, they put poison in the food and water. So because of the torture, in 1969 alone, 630 prisoners died.

"In Con Son when I was there, there

were 4 wards, but now the number is increased by 7. And now there are 120 tiger cages. Women coming from this prison have told me that 365 women were detained in tiger cages. During 1970, more than 800 prisoners died. Up to 1970, there had been 10,000 prisoners there.

"In Thuduc prison in July and August, 1969, they oppressed the prisoners and hundreds were wounded. Two hundred women were massacred, among them many children.

"Dear sisters and brothers:

"The U.S. and Saigon administrations have applied most barbarous tortures and repressive means to stop the patriotic movement. The more barbarous the enemy is, the stronger the struggle of the people. Before their arrest many women have been 'innocent'.

after World War II, Khampheng and part of her family withdrew with the resistance forces into jungles. Her parents, grandfather and two children stayed in the occupied zone. "My father once worked as a councillor to the King. Because he believed in peace and neutrality, he was pushed out by the puppet regime."

Khampheng went to the rear as a teacher, and has worked there ever since. She teaches children by day and adults at night, but says it is "terribly difficult because of the bombardment." About 2,000 schools in Laos have been destroyed. Even so, from a 55% illiteracy rate under the French, Khampheng claims that 86 percent of children in the liberated zone now go to school. Classes meet in small groups underground or in the jungle, under the shade of trees.

"I have five children now, but have no time to be with them. Two of my sons



But after their arrest, they become active in the revolutionary movement.

"Thank you and good health to you."

When Mme. Huong finished her recital on April 1st, the audience stood and many wept. But as we left the auditorium, we heard that President Nixon had just released Lieutenant Calley to his quarters.

KHAMPHENG BOUPHA says her personal story is much like that of other Laotian women- "nothing special". She has taken part in the revolution since it began in 1945.

When the French invaded Laos again

are health workers in a hospital, but two live in the puppet zone and have been forced to join the puppet army. One of my nephews had to join the puppet airforce, and died in battle against the liberated zone.

"That is my small contribution to my people--educating the children. I'm proud of my responsibility.

"Everybody wishes the National Concord would be brought to our country. That's why we wish the withdrawal of U.S. troops. But the U.S. imperialists want to carry out their policy of divide and rule, by dividing families and trying to make them kill each other."

KHEMPHET PHOLSEN'S son is 10 months old. She has a beautiful voice and sings songs of women in the liberated zone. But her voice trembled when she took the microphone on April 1st.

"Today is the eighth anniversary of the assassination of my father, Quinim Pholsena, by agents of the CIA.⁴ My life was closely linked with that of my father. I am determined to follow his road.

"My father was President of the Party for Peace and Neutrality. During 1957, the Neo Lao Haksat negotiated with the opposite forces. My father agreed with the Pathet Lao to form a National Coalition Government for peace and neutrality. But on the very first day of its formation, this government was thrown out by the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys.

"In 1962 my father again negotiated

thought they could intimidate her to give up her neutral policy. But instead they only sowed deep hatred in her heart. Although disabled, she took her twelve children and joined the liberated zone. All the other children and I are determined to follow the same policy - peace and neutrality. There are many situations like my own.

"I consider my teaching job, though very small, a great honor - a proud contribution to the service of my people."

Political and Military Situations

In their public meetings, the Indo-chinese outlined the situations in their countries. What follows is a much compressed account.⁵

Laos



with the Neo Lao Haksat for a second neutral government, and in this government he took the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs. As such, he followed a policy of strict neutrality, establishing diplomatic relations with all governments which agreed with our neutrality and supported us without strings.

"The U.S. imperialists considered my father an obstacle to their policy of aggression, and so they used the Asian CIA to kill him. In that attack they also wounded my mother, who is still disabled.

"By assassinating my father and wounding my mother, the imperialists

The U.S. government has carried out aggression against Laos continuously for 16 years, and has used it as a strategically placed neo-colony and military base in Southeast Asia over the past ten years. Inside Laos, the aggressors have until recently been U.S. advisers and troops, Thai mercenaries, a dwindling Laotian puppet army, and Meo tribesmen employed as Special Forces under U.S. command. U.S. aid to the Laotian puppet regime amounted to \$300,000,000 in 1969-70, of which \$250,000,000 went for military affairs, including \$150,000,000 for the Special Forces. During the Nixon period B-52's have daily rained an average of 3,000 tons of bombs on Laos, killing countless

civilians. In the past two years the equivalent of 4 Hiroshimas a month has been dropped on this country, the most heavily bombed in history.

The Lao Patriotic Front has, however, won every ground battle since 1968 and claims to administer two-thirds of the land and about half the population. The recent invasion, said to have been by 20,000 Saigon and U.S. troops (with 25,000 others left in reserve at Khe Sanh across the border) has been defeated. In Laos the invaders were able to move only 3 miles in one month before they were routed. In 43 days of battle, 15,400 Saigon and U.S. troops were reported to have been killed or put out of action, including 200 Americans killed - altogether, three-quarters of the invading troops. One thousand Saigon and American troops were captured, many of them officers. Five hundred and ninety-six vehicles were said to have

bodian invasions, the NLF won victories inside South Vietnam. The Saigon puppet troops' morale was said to be very low. Even Saigon General Do Cao Tri recently admitted, "Out of 100 soldiers, 70 have deserted or are attempting to desert, 25 are suffering low morale, and only 5 have any fighting spirit." The Thieu-Ky-Khiem regime was said to be now opposed by virtually every sector of the people. In the countryside people are rising up to smash the strategic hamlets. Urban struggles in Saigon, Hue and Danang are now coordinated. In cooperation with Pathet Lao and Cambodian troops, the NLF has inflicted heavy losses at Khe Sanh. During the recent Cambodian and Laotian invasions, the NLF claims to have killed or wounded 8,000 out of 25,000 puppet and U.S. troops at Khe Sanh, two-thirds of whom were Americans. In one night in March they destroyed or shot down 40 planes and put out of action about 100 pilots



been destroyed, including 444 U.S. tanks. Four hundred and eighty-six planes were shot down, including 306 helicopters - an estimated five-sixths of the total planes used in the invasion. One hundred and forty-four pieces of artillery were captured.

The Laotians expect Nixon to continue the war in various forms and to prolong the conflagration in Indochina as long as possible. The struggle ahead is still a hard one, requiring the utmost determination by anti-war forces both in the U.S.A. and in Laos.

South Vietnam

During the recent Laotian and Cam-

and technicians.

Between 1961 and 1969, the U.S. forces dropped on South Vietnam 50,000 tons of herbicides and defoliants, destroyed the vegetation on 43 percent of the cultivated land and on 44 percent of the forest land, and injured 275,000 people, of whom 400 died. More recently, in the two years of President Nixon's administration, "Vietnamization" and saturation bombing have disrupted all normal life in every village of South Vietnam. During Nixon's administration, 2,131,234 tons of bombs have been dropped, and 2,229,155 tons of shells have been used. These have surpassed the total amount of explosions by all forces during the whole of World

War II. "My Lais" have been very numerous. In 1970 alone, toxic chemicals destroyed 1,800,000 acres of vegetation, made 618,000 people seriously ill, and killed about 1,000. In one month in Lo Dieu hamlet in Binh Dinh province, 73 persons were killed by toxic chemicals. Sixty-five of these were children, 8 were adults. In addition, 11 women had miscarriages. In general, very large numbers of pregnant women have miscarried as a result of toxic chemicals; many who do not miscarry give birth to babies who are deformed.

The NLF delegates did not rule out the use of nuclear weapons by Nixon in Indochina, but thought that they could only further damage the U.S. situation. They pointed out that the U.S. still has one million puppet troops and 300,000 Americans in Indochina - more than were deployed at the height of the Korean war. How could these escape the

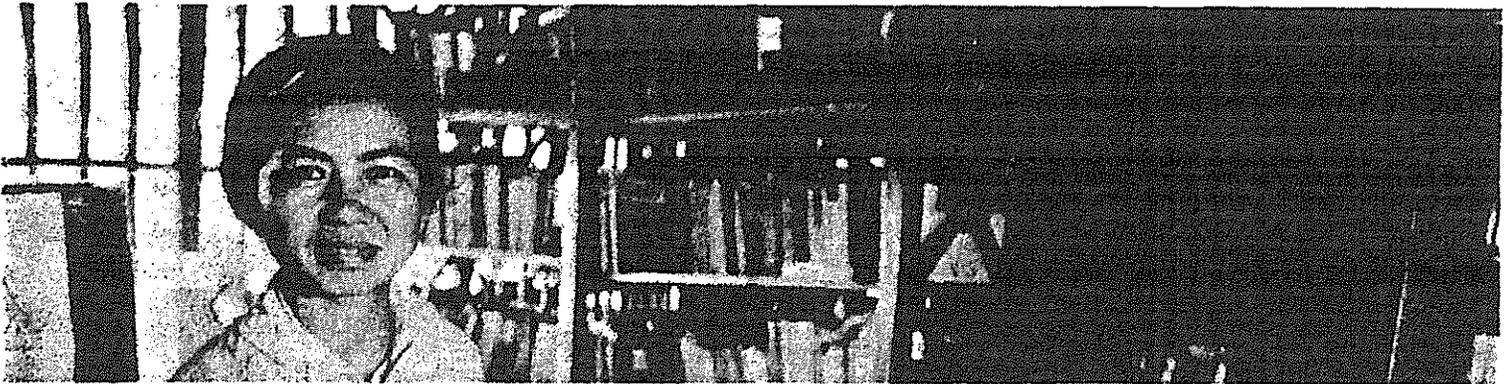
is the most deceitful."

On the Calley trial (just before the news of his release) the Indochinese press statement was as follows:

"We do not believe that when G.I.'s come to Indochina they intend to commit atrocities. When they come there, in view of their situation and orders, many do commit them and should be punished. But those first responsible for these atrocities are the men of the Johnson and Nixon administrations. These men should be tried by a world court and executed for crimes against humanity."

Cambodia

In spite of the failure and retreat of the ground invasion of 1970, heavy bombing has been continuous and, of course, the U.S. command again invaded Cambodia with 20,000 Saigon and American



effects of nuclear weapons? As for the people, the total tonnage of bombs dropped so far is equal to large numbers of nuclear weapons. "The question is whether the people in the world and the American people will let Nixon use nuclear weapons, or not. Anyhow, we are prepared to face any circumstances, because Mr. Nixon is not a wise man. You know, he is a madman. And you know we are resolved to fight for independence and freedom. We would rather sacrifice everything than to be enslaved. So we don't fear violence, whatever form - even nuclear weapons."⁶ Delegates stressed the perfidious nature of the Nixon administration and its ability to deceive Americans with lies and promises of withdrawal. "Of all Presidents, Nixon

troops in February 1971. The Cambodians claim that half the invading troops have been killed or disabled, half their tanks destroyed, and 50 planes shot down. The Cambodian National United Front, under the Royal Government of National Unity, is estimated to have liberated six-tenths of Cambodian territory.

Democratic Republic of Vietnam

Although the bombing of North Vietnam stopped officially in November, 1968, U.S. bomb tonnage on Indochina as a whole has doubled under the Nixon administration. The cost of the war to the U.S.A. is still increasing and has reached \$30 billion a year.

In response to the widening of the war, the Indochinese liberation governments agreed at a summit conference in April 1970 to coordinate their strategies to evict the U.S. from Indochina. Their armed forces now cooperate closely, while the political policies of each country remain independent.

In spite of announced policy, U.S. reconnaissance flights over the DRV have never ceased. On November 21 and 22, 1970, U.S. planes bombed and strafed 80 localities in several provinces, including the suburbs of Hanoi. There were also attacks on fishing boats. Nixon's claim that these attacks related to the safety of U.S. prisoners was, of course, false. Arrangements for exchange of prisoners can go forward as soon as the U.S. even sets a date for the withdrawal of all troops and military material and the cessation of bombing throughout Vietnam.

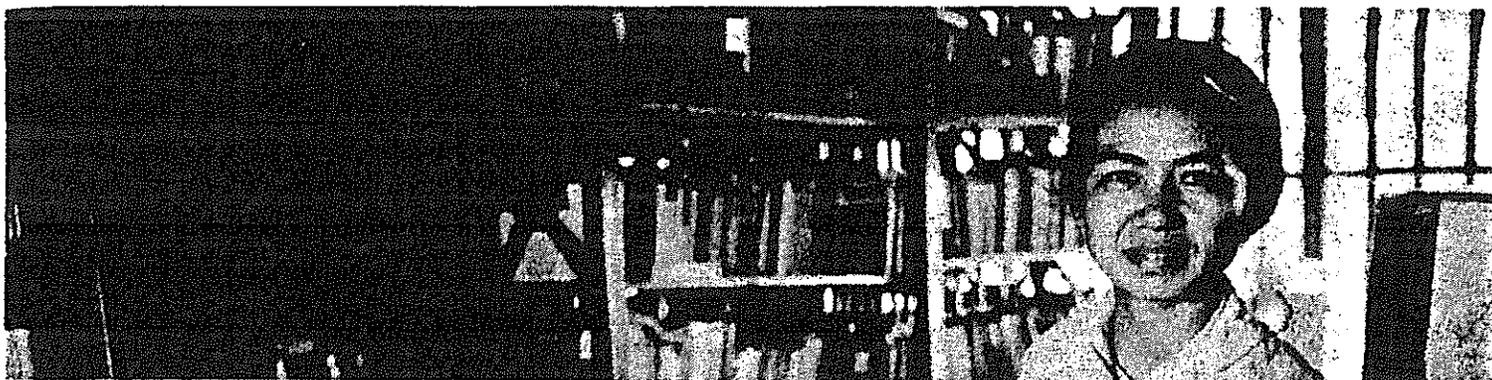
FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL U.S. TROOPS AND WAR MATERIAL AND THE ENDING OF ALL BOMBING IN INDOCHINA, AND LEAVE THE INDOCHINESE PEOPLE TO SETTLE THEIR OWN AFFAIRS."

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Workshop discussions ranged over many topics, but in all the conferences three subjects came to the fore: women's liberation, the state of the U.S. anti-war movement, and revolutionary processes in Indochina. As there was much repetition, I have culled from several workshops what seemed to be significant statements on these subjects.⁷

Women's Liberation

Question. How has the revolution changed the lives of women, and what is the character of women's organizations in Indochina?



The U.S. government has massed large numbers of troops in the Demilitarized Zone and in March 1971 threatened to invade the DRV. In February and March of this year B-52's again dropped bombs and toxic chemicals over Ha-Tinh and Kwang-Binh provinces, injuring hundreds of civilians.

Since the "official" cessation of bombing in 1968, however, the DRV has been able to build up its military potential. In every village people are ready in case of invasion and can defeat it.

The demand of all the Indochinese people, and the message of the conference, is: "SET A DATE DURING 1971

Answer.(DRV) Formerly our country was under feudalism and colonialism. Women were therefore under two kinds of oppression. As women, they were totally dependent on the family - for example, they had no right to go to school. About 90 percent of Vietnamese women were illiterate.

Women worked only to look after the family. If a man had a daughter, it was as if the daughter didn't exist. Even if a family had ten daughters, the father considered that he had no child. When a woman married, her husband could have any number of wives. Men did not respect their wives, and parents-in-law regarded their daughter-in-law as a servant. After the death of the husband, his

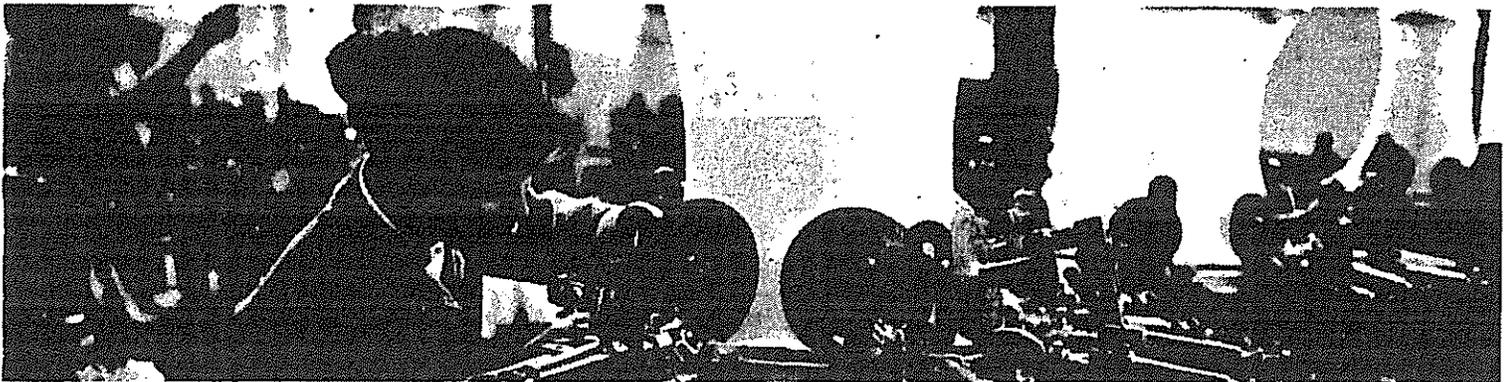
widow could not remarry and at the same time retain her children or any property. In fact, all property was controlled by men and all decisions made by them.

As colonized people, women had no rights of citizenship. That meant they had no right to participate in either the family or society. Sometimes, for example, women wanted to leave their families and live independently. But the surrounding society spoiled their lives.

When we started the liberation struggle, women began to struggle against male dominance as well. In order to liberate the country we had to liberate the family. When women participate in the national liberation struggle, their prestige goes up and their role becomes more important. Only (political) independence can

in ministries and assemblies, as well as in economic life. Formerly we had two or three women doctors; now we have about 5,000 women graduates of medicine and engineering. Thirty-seven percent of the graduates of Hanoi University are women, and about half the students now in high schools are girls.

...To give a further idea, we should point out that 60 percent of the members of cooperatives and factories are women, and between 50 and 60 percent of the workers in education and health. Sixteen point nine percent of the members of our National Assembly are women, and about half the members of the People's Council. Two-thirds of the members of village administrative committees are women, and out of 5,000 villages, 4,300 have women as village chairmen... Women form roughly half the members of district administrative committees, and



remove the family yoke. Women's role is very important in the national struggle - we can't win without them.

After our independence was achieved in the North, we began socialist construction. Then came the real equality of men and women.

To join our women's movement one must be participating in the liberation of the country. After independence, our government provided facilities for the education of women, and rights to work equally with men. The equality of women is contained in Article 24 of the constitution of our national assembly. Before, women had no place in politics. Now they are fully represented

about 35 percent at the provincial level. We have four women vice-ministers, and the Women's Union is important in government.

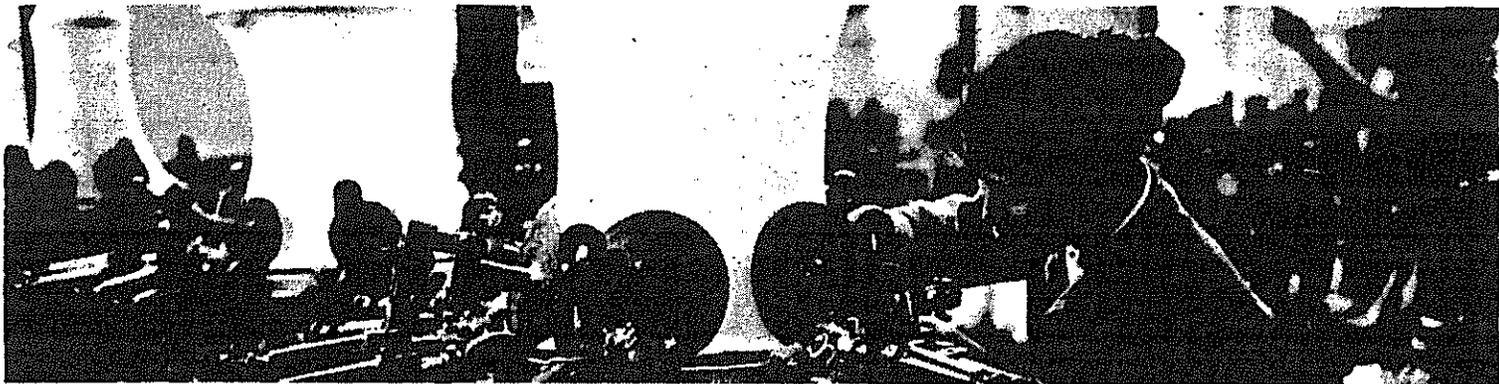
Throughout Indochina, women play a very active role in fighting. They defend villages, transport ammunition, and form militia units to shoot down planes. In Vietnam about a third of the guerilla leaders in villages are women...

Inequality is not completely wiped out - we still have to eliminate the feudalistic ideology of men. The woman of a family may be a university graduate, but may still be looked down on by her husband. We call this the "inner

struggle" within the family, and it is a very long one.

Some branches of activity are especially suitable for women, and there they have high priority. In the Institute for the Preservation of Mothers and Babies, we give special responsibility to women, who form about two-thirds of the staff.

In the process of our long struggle for liberation, male cadres learned to cook, to care for children, and to wash clothes. In this way, husbands learned to help their wives at home. The struggle is not a clash between men and women, but between institutions and ideologies, and between the new government and the old customs. The government has to provide day care, for example, for all children; women simply can't do it individually, given their other tasks.



In any office or responsibility, if a woman is capable, our government's policy is to advance her. Ho Chi Minh always asked how many women were participating in any conference, and asked them to give their opinions first. He severely criticized cadres for backwater and feudalistic ideologies.

Husbands and wives who work in the same area belong to the same trade union. The trade union's role is very important: if there is antagonism between husband and wife the trade union leader criticizes the husband if he is mistaken, or the wife if she is mistaken. Thus the ideological struggle is always going on; success is possible because socialism is being built.

...With regard to marriage, we now educate married men not to love other women, and vice-versa. Because there are more women than men, some have proposed to return to polygamy, but for the sake of unity and solidarity we do not accept such demands. Instead, we try to educate them, and under the Marriage Law we enforce monogamy.

(South Vietnam) Since 1945 and the August revolution a great change has taken place. Women have become aware that they were oppressed and that they had to fight, both for the freedom of their country and for their rights. Before 1951 no women's organization existed, and various scattered activities were taking place all over. Our organization, the Women's Union for National Salvation, was formed then out of the different parts of the struggle. Its motif has been "Peace, Independence, and Women's Rights." Since then several other women's

organizations have been formed- such as the Women's Organization to Defend Women's Dignity and the Women's Movement for the Right to Live.

It is because of their contributions to the national struggle that women now have the same status as men. Men and women are equal and take part in all aspects of the struggle; for example the majority of machine workers in South Vietnam are women, and there is a Vietnamese Women's Army...

Three things we have learned about women's liberation:

1. The system of society (whether imperialism or socialism) determines whether

or not women have equal rights. Imperialists do not want women doing important work because they are afraid they might challenge them.

2. If women want to enjoy equality with men they must be economically equal.

3. In any period of time, if there is work to do women must help to do it. We can't ask for emancipation and freedom in our country if we don't make any contribution. If we do our job well, they have to admit we are important.

...If women take part in the struggle it follows that some will have to be given leadership positions. Because we have such a strong women's military force, for example, we need a woman in government to administer those forces. About 75 percent of the people on our village councils are women, and we also have large representation at the district,

Q. What are the facilities for medical supplies and medical care in the DRV?

A. Formerly we had one hospital per province, for the French and the rich. There were no hospitals in villages, and dysentery and epidemics were rife. After the revolution succeeded, we built a network of health-care from village to district, province and center. Now we can prevent smallpox, polio and other diseases still found in South Vietnam.

We do have basic medicines but we need extras. Health service work is very heavy because of the war. That is why we need help from foreign countries and from yourselves.

Q. How has the revolution in your country affected the family structure?

A. (South Vietnam) What we would like to have in Vietnam are very ordinary families. What we have now are families very often separated. But we feel that



provincial and regional levels. Our Foreign Minister is, of course, a woman, and so is the Pathet Lao Minister of Social Affairs. Because men now realize that women are capable, especially in villages where the majority of fighters are women, most men dare not belittle women as they did before.

Q. Have women the right to obtain abortions?

A. (DRV) Women have the right to get abortions with the help of the health service. That is a woman's choice and right. Even if the husband wants more children, if the wife does not, she can come for abortion. To avoid pregnancy, the hospital will give birth control methods freely.

a good man is loyal to a wife, and a good woman is a good housewife. We educate women to take care of the family as well as other things. Double responsibility for the family as well as the organization is our slogan.

Q. Do you foresee a time when the men will take equal responsibility for the children?

A. If the wife is busy with social work in the community the husband must take care of the children, but generally the responsibility rests with women.

Q. How do you educate children in a revolutionary society to understand and participate in the revolution?

A. (South Vietnam) We educate the children

with love for their compatriots, the country, and labor. They must respect discipline and be active in study. An organization for children is very active in fighting and cultural activities, and as soon as they are able to speak our children must be united with other children. Children are expected to produce and to take part in farm activities to bring in food.

Q. Are there women who do not want to enter into the structure of the family and have children, and are they respected?

A. (South Vietnam) No, this is not generally true, but because they are so busy fighting and working, women cannot give birth to as many children as they would wish. Moreover, because a woman cannot be as active in community life if she has too many children, we limit the number of children a woman may have and encourage women to marry later.

The U.S. Anti-War Movement

Q. (After about half an hour of U.S. and Canadian discussion of the DRV delegates' question, "What are your main problems?") In the U.S.A., there is disunity between the several kinds of anti-war groups, revolutionary groups, and oppressed groups (Third World peoples, unemployed, poor people, youth, women's groups) who are struggling for survival or for the improvement of their conditions. We can't find a basis for unity but we feel we should. What is your opinion?

A. (After an hour of private consultation within the DRV delegation. Similar answers were given independently by the Laotians and the South Vietnamese.)

You have raised the single-issue versus the multi-issue question, to use American terminology. This is our response.



But in my country we are suppressed not by men but by the system. That is why we need and wish to relate men in our struggles.

Q. Are male and female children treated differently?

A. No, this happened in feudal times but not now. However, we think that little boys should act like little boys, and little girls like little girls. For example, I bought some toys for my children and I bought a ball for the boy and a doll for the girl.

Q. As in Algeria, do you think that women will return to traditional roles after the revolution is over?

A. (South Vietnam) No, we think not.

We believe that there are no multi-issues, only the single issue of the struggle against imperialism.

The U.S. administration's aggression has caused suffering not only to the Indochinese people but to the American people. The U.S. imperialists are not our enemies only. They also use the American youth as cannon fodder. Many American families have suffered losses and people are mourning in the U.S.A. The U.S. government has wasted a lot of people and money, and economic and other crises have resulted from the war. The position of the U.S. in the world is declining. Its prestige is very low now, and its honor blemished. We are concerned that the U.S. administration

has dishonored the American people. The suffering of both our peoples is stressed by us.

Our duty as Indochinese is to fight against aggression. The American people have the task, for their own sakes, to work to stop the war in Indochina. That is the work of the American people.

Our two peoples are struggling for their own interests. The two struggles are closely interrelated, the one with the other, and the two can help each other. We and you have to struggle in different ways, but we must both ask: WHO IS THE MAIN ENEMY? and WHO IS CAUSING THE MAIN SUFFERING? Our common enemy is the United States administration.

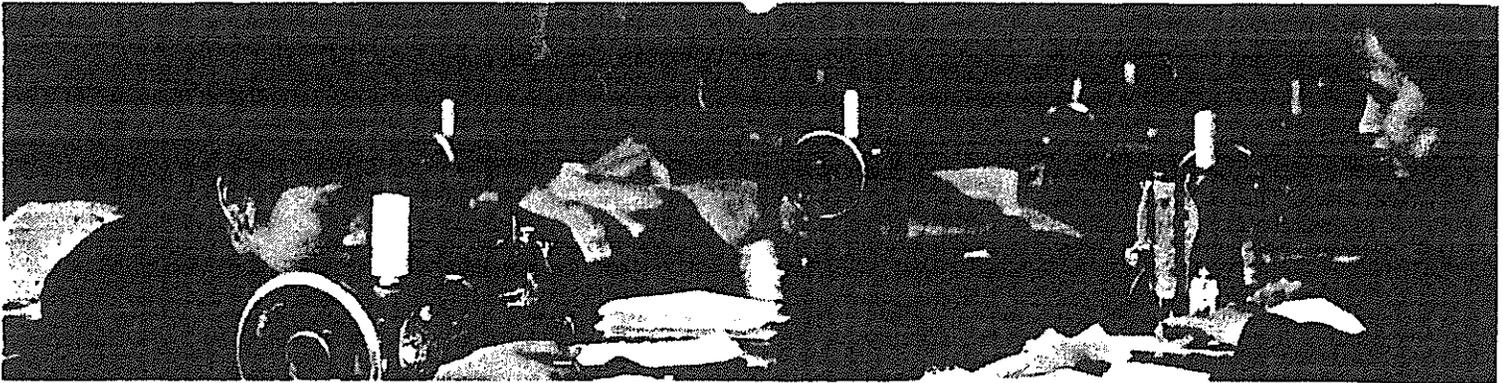
In the past the U.S. anti-war movement has had a very big success. It was instrumental in stopping the

of the present nature of American suffering results from the war in Indochina. You can therefore combine the multi-issues in the single issue. Johnson promised you the Great Society, but he could not deliver it because of the war.

The Indochinese people are struggling for their countries. The U.S. people are struggling for their life, liberty and honor, as in the time of Lincoln, a time that we greatly respect.

Q. But U.S. imperialism is involved not only in Indochina, but throughout much of the world and here at home. It seems that only a socialist revolution can put a stop to imperialism.

A. To this we would say that our revolution has been a very long process. We could say it dates from 1880, and is not yet completed. A revolution is a long and hard task, not an easy task.



bombing of the DRV in 1968, and in the withdrawal from Cambodia in 1970. Nixon is afraid of the anti-war movement because it forces him to ponder his strategies. Yet Nixon will find every way to deceive you. Therefore you must be vigilant and you must strike hard. Our two struggles cannot be replaced, the one by the other, but together we can be successful.

If the American people stop the war, this will decrease the suffering for both our peoples and raise your domestic struggles to a higher level. We understand that racism, poverty and unemployment existed in America before the war and will continue after. Yet the war has greatly increased these conflicts; much

It requires struggle from generation to generation, in which children must be prepared for sacrifice. At present the American people have the capacity to mobilize broad unity in order to stop the war.

Q. What do you most need from us?

A. We need three things: (1) Your demand that Nixon set a date before the end of 1971 for complete withdrawal of all troops, material and bombing from Indochina. (2) All forms of political work towards this end. (3) Money, medical supplies and clothing; we can especially use more medical supplies from Canada. These may be sent to the PRG Information Bureau, Box 315101, 24 Stockholm, Sweden.

Q. Many activities are being planned for the Spring offensive in the U.S.A. Where is it most effective to put our energies?

A. (Laos) If we want to reach success in a struggle we must use many methods at the same time. All our actions must be going on continuously. And our actions must move from a low level to a high level.

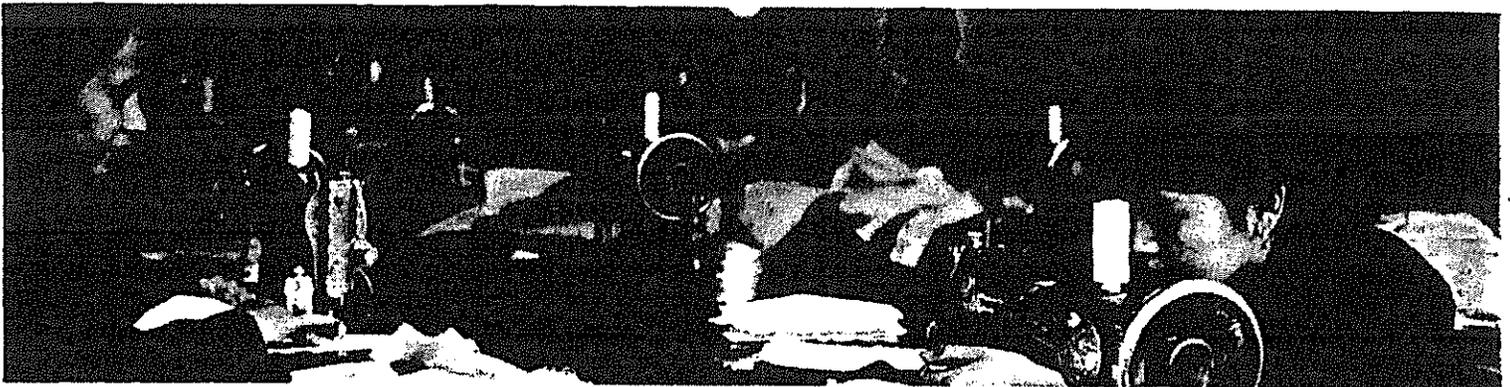
We must also be prepared for all the struggles to take a long time. Actions must go on, but the results may not be seen for a long time.

In the past we have followed anti-war activities in Canada and the U.S.A. We have taken note of the demonstrations, petitions, and many other actions. They all help in our struggle against U.S. aggression. The most important thing is to mobilize larger forces to undertake these actions. If we are larger and more united, we can achieve greater success. We need unity and

Education is very important, explaining to more people how their sufferings are linked with the war, and educating by example. Especially G.I.'s and G.I. families - draft resistance and desertion are very good contributions. Spread the slogan, "Don't go to Vietnam". If they refuse to go, no prison is big enough to hold them. Then, help support their families. Break down the military machine - try to persuade people to stop war production.

Let G.I.'s in Indochina know about the movement. They have been told that if they desert to our side, we will kill them. Let them know that the Indochinese policy is to protect them if they desert, and, if they wish not to stay with us, to send them to a foreign country such as Sweden.

Veterans and returned pressmen should be encouraged to let the American people know what is happening. Send



solidarity between the many groups. (DRV) The stronger the action, the more effective, and that means large participation. As Ho Chi Minh said, "Unity, unity, larger unity; success, success, bigger success."

The greater the difficulties, the broader must be the force in order to defeat the enemy. The more we consolidate, the more we weaken and divide the enemy.

The People's Peace Treaty (which many signed at the conference) is an example. In itself it is only words. If it strengthens the movement it is good; it is not good if it weakens and divides the movement. You must find out.

delegations to Indochina to find out. Legal struggles are especially valuable if they increase the movement, as they bring on less repression. A large mobilization on April 24 will be very valuable, and all groups should cooperate provided their demand is total withdrawal. These are not all the specifics - we can't tell you those - but any activity that enlarges the movement.

Q. Do you see a place for revolutionary violence in the anti-war movement in the U.S.A.?

A. (Laos) The struggle in each country must be based on an understanding of that country. In general we begin by political struggle, moving from low level to high level.

We see that in the developed capitalist countries there is an apparatus of repression to annihilate popular movements of struggle, in order to protect the capitalist system. Therefore many political methods are necessary. If you use only one method, you cannot make them give up their power.

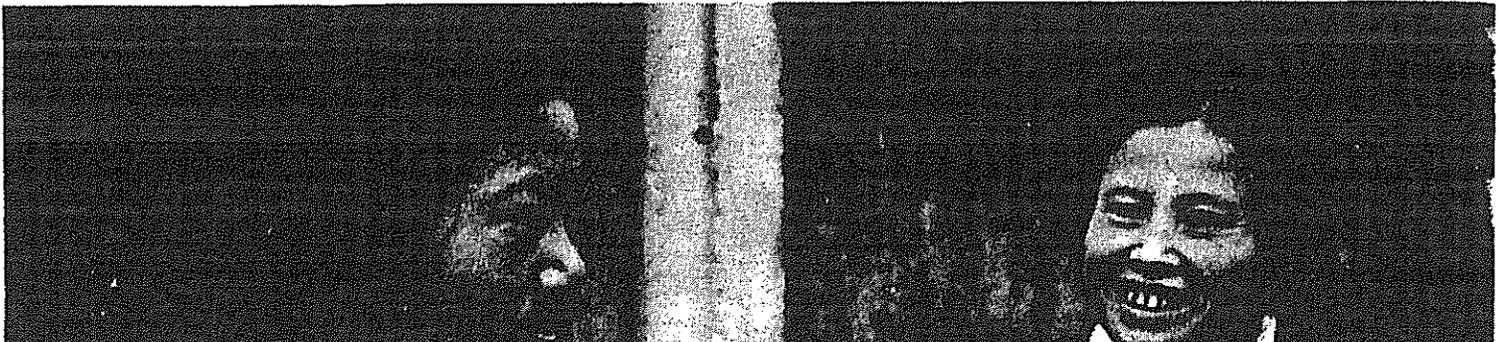
In Laos, the Lao Patriotic Front educates and does political work, but it also arms the people. The choice between the use of political or armed struggle, or both, depends on the consciousness of the people and the national and international situations.

To make a revolution victorious we must have a just line and a just leadership, an armed force, and a large united front. As for the Lao Patriotic Front, we have a base area in our liberated zone. Everything comes from

Revolutionary force is in two parts: (1) political force and (2) armed force. When we say political force we refer to the consciousness of people; they participate in struggle. The majority of people do struggle when they become conscious of the aim. They are determined to struggle, ready to sacrifice their life to reach the common goal.

You need this political force - of people always on the offensive. The force must be large and strong, of people determined and courageous, who can take repression. When one is killed or jailed, another takes the place.

Our best example is women in the puppet zones of South Vietnam, what the Americans called the "long-haired army". Such women don't use arms, but they do a great deal. They carry the wounded to



people. The NLF operates always with the support of the people.

Isolation in the fight is very dangerous.

We say to you: Be patient. Be flexible. Be vigilant. And wage a persistent struggle.

Q. Should revolutionaries form alliances with non-revolutionary and non-progressive forces to oppose the war? If so, how?

A. (DRV): The main question is unity for the common goal - END THE WAR. The more people the better. Divide the enemy - get them fighting among themselves. Exploit to the utmost the splits in the ruling class. Isolate the Nixon administration. Work even with Senators - any people - who are willing to end the war. You do not have to decrease your main objective because of their presence

dred and nine cases were tried for refusal to join battle.

In Cambodia, soldiers of the 3rd battalion, 4th division, have refused to fight, saying, "We were deceived by Nixon".

Black G.I.'s have a slogan - "Our war is back home, not here."

Soldiers make it hard for officers to command them; therefore, increasingly, officers take a flexible attitude toward soldiers.

Most people killed on the battlefield are draftees, not volunteers. G.I.'s in the field look forward to news of the anti-war movement. One pilot who was shot down in Laos complained, "We were forced to fight."

Revolutionary Processes in Indochina



with you.

Q. Can you tell us something about our G.I.'s in Indochina?

A. (South Vietnam) We know that an unduly large proportion of G.I.'s are "colored", perhaps 40 percent, and that "colored" G.I.'s are sent to dangerous situations and don't get many promotions. We don't know the exact numbers by national minority, among the "colored" G.I.'s.

Anti-war feeling is increasing among the G.I.'s, especially black G.I.'s. During 1970 at least 500 G.I.'s refused to go into battle, many of them black G.I.'s. In September 1970, near Saigon, 30 G.I.'s refused battle. Five of them were hanged from helicopters. One hun-

Q. What is the relationship of your national minorities to the revolutionary movement?

A. (Laos): The population of Laos is quite small - about 3 million. The three main ethnic groups are the Lao Lum people of the plains, the Lao Theung of the plateau, and the Lao Xung in the mountains.⁸ In general these peoples have united in a community of struggle against the imperialists.

Both the French and the U.S. imperialists tried to carry out a policy of "divide and rule". They gave special importance to the Meo minority (the largest of the Lao Xung tribes), making use of the Meo as a force of aggression. Meo people are trained and equipped as

Special Forces under American advisers; the Special Forces number about 24,000. However, in the course of their attacks on the liberated zone they have sustained great losses. That is why they are now forcing 13 to 15 year olds to enroll. Young men pay the chief of their tribe to try to escape taking part in attacks on the liberated zone.

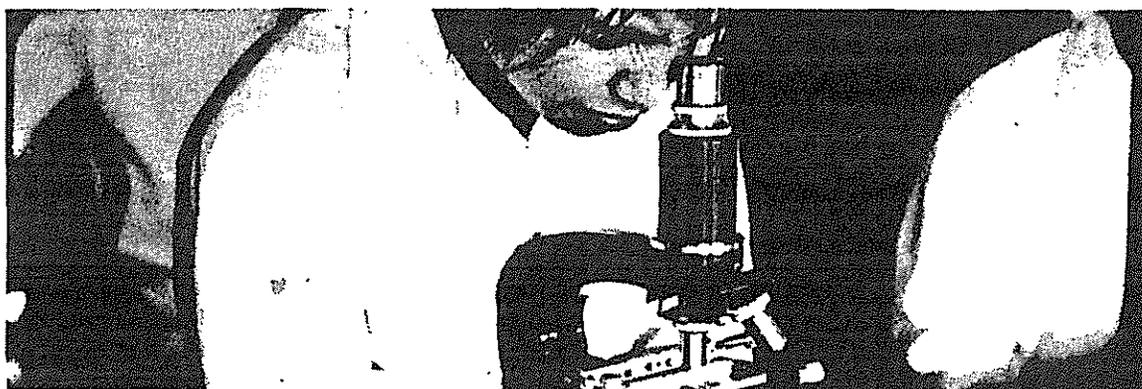
In the liberated zone we have placed great emphasis on education for the minorities, and literacy has increased very greatly among them. We have set up 24 schools for minority children. Out of 160 villages, 15 villages of Lao Xung, including Meo, now have no illiteracy at all.

(South Vietnam) In South Vietnam we have 30 national minorities, from 45 villages. During the U.S. occupation they have been herded into one place, given poor food, and deprived

an extremely important part in the struggle. Minority people were crucial in the victory at Dien Bien Phu. During the revolution minority people built roads, buried ammunition, and participated in every way, so the victory was heavily dependent on minority support. Today, tribal areas are autonomous regions; they elect their own governments. Economic construction is going on and there is rapid advancement. In general we have been able to develop deep feelings of affection between the minority and majority populations.

Q. What is meant by a United Front, and how did you form one?

A. (Laos) Our first Front was composed of those who left their families in order to fight the French. It was rather limited. Still, during this time the French imperialists suffered a great setback.



of their means of production. The NLF makes the demand that they be returned to their tribal homes. Their area has been very badly destroyed by the U.S. forces. On one occasion, in three hours, U.S. aircraft killed 350 tribal people and injured thousands of others.

The U.S. policy on minorities is the same in Vietnam as in Laos - misusing the minorities. However, we are able to overcome the minorities' problems and to unite all in the struggle for freedom. We educate the minorities about the U.S. policies of divide and rule.

(DRV) The base of our revolution against the French was among the minorities in the mountains and they played

Then the Americans came. In the face of this enemy which is the leader of all the imperialists, it was necessary to build a broader front. That is why, in 1956, we formed the Neo Lao Haksat or Lao Patriotic Front. This front contains all the religious creeds and several political parties. Its slogan is "Peace and Neutrality".

...We recognize that there are many tendencies within the opposing forces. We try to win the support of those who are hesitating, who are not die-hard counterrevolutionaries. We distinguish between those who are patriotic and those who are total sell-outs to imperialism.

Souvanna Phouma is a concrete example.

We are against him. But if he said a single word indicating he would settle the Lao question by political means, we would agree to that. However, although he said he would work for peace and neutrality, in reality he has sold himself to U.S. imperialism.

The policy of the United Front in Laos is to win more supporters and isolate the administration. It is a tactical policy, a policy of increasing our friends and decreasing the enemy. We do not fight everyone at the same time. We choose the most fierce, and by this way we can preserve our strength.

...In Laos almost all the people are Buddhists. The Lao Patriotic Front follows a policy of free religion. There are about 6,000 priests in the liberated zone. They have their own organizations, and there are Buddhist representatives and those of other



religious groups in the Central Committee of the LPF. Many pagodas have been bombed by the U.S. and so the Buddhists sympathize with the LPF. The LPF represents the Buddhists and helps to rebuild the pagodas. The priests don't fight, but they help in the struggle by teaching.

In the U.S. zone, however, priests are used as tools in the psychological war, and they falsify religious doctrine. The pagodas are made places of pleasure. They have printed a religious study to falsify religious doctrine in order to mislead the people, and they divide people between religions. CIA representatives even wear priests'

robes in order to do propaganda...

The main things in our struggle have been clear-sighted leadership, a strong rear, and strong armed forces. We use our rear base to consolidate our armed forces. The more we can consolidate the liberated zone, the faster we can advance to liberty.

We make different demands and use different slogans in the puppet areas from those in the liberated zones, in order to organize people better. For example, we demand that the puppet administration bring home women's husbands, ameliorate living conditions, build schools, and raise the wages of government servants.

(Subordinate question): How do you resolve class-chauvinism in organizing? For example, the bourgeoisie is an exploiting class, but the proletariat

is exploited.

A. We do say that some only from the exploiting class will agree to end their exploitation and join the revolutionary forces. The question of bourgeoisie versus proletariat is not prominent in Laos, which is an agricultural country. The liberated zone is in the countryside, and there are not many factories. In general our policy is to unite everyone who will go with the revolution voluntarily at any given stage.

(DRV) To carry out our revolution, we had to be strong, we had to be a force. Therefore, we had to have a party.

To get a broad front we had to unite the peasants and the working class. The working class was most oppressed, so they were more revolutionary; the peasants also were a very oppressed class. These strong forces created a strong revolutionary army. Under the French the intellectuals and many landlords and capitalists were also oppressed; therefore we embraced them into the Front.

At each stage of the struggle we have to have a main objective and fight for it. In Vietnam, the first stage is to form a front against the imperialists. The second stage, after the imperialists are expelled, is the Fatherland Front to carry out the socialist revolution, composed of all those who agree with socialism. At each stage we can change the makeup of the front to embrace all who support the main objective.

restricted their exploitation. During the struggle our government decreed a new rent law. Formerly the peasant gave two-thirds of the crop to the landlord. Under the new law, the peasant kept two-thirds. We have to educate the landlords. It is not an easy job. During the process of education, they agree to work as peasants. As the revolution succeeds, most become "resistance landlords", agreeing to complete equality with the peasants. The main point is that we have to raise people's positive sides - especially their patriotism. Thus we unite with them while carrying on the "inner struggle".

The purpose of building a front is to reach a common goal. Those who agree with our goal we accept; those who don't, we don't. Then there are those who do not yet know the aim of the struggle. We have to educate them step by step, and



The Front embraces all the political parties, religious creeds and ethnic groups who support the ongoing revolution. Besides the creation of the Front, we make use of the contradictions within the enemy.

An example of how we operate the Front. During the resistance against the French imperialists, our Front was the Viet Minh. Landlords were in this front. Yet landlords oppress peasants, and peasants are the main force of the revolution. The interests of the classes contradict each other. But one point was agreed upon - independence and patriotism. We accepted the landlords because they wanted to fight against the French. At the same time, we

when they agree with our common goal we receive them into the Front. If they can agree with us on some main point in order to reach our goal, we can move together with them.

Q. How do you resolve the contradiction between working underground and building a mass base? Between legal and illegal struggles?

A. In Vietnam, because of the machinery of spying and repression, the nature of the enemy, we have to work underground. We use both open methods (legal) and closed methods (illegal). In both cases we use the methods that can mobilize the masses.

For example, after the French

repression came we met in separate groups, sewing groups, sporting groups, drama groups, etc., in order to educate each other. First, we demanded the daily interests of the people: shorter hours in factories, more schools, hospitals, higher wages, freedom of the press. All these struggles were legal and conformed to the interests of the people. Step by step, people participated more and more until it became a question of the final goal - how to take the power.

Wherever we can we use legal methods to organize people, while keeping in reserve the "hidden forces". Our leaders in particular work underground. Protecting the revolutionary forces is very, very important. To do this we must have the support of the masses, to hide the forces and weapons and those who lead the struggle.

If the government has a democratic



Cadres are anonymous - they don't stand out. One can know the leader by what he wears, how he touches his ear, his hair-style, etc. The enemy can't discover who the leaders are. We hold our meetings in darkness. You can hear the speaker but not see his face. If it is a multi-struggle, the cadres have no need to show their faces. One's discretion makes one more valuable in revolution.

The work of the cadre is to educate people not to be afraid. For example, under the French repression women were at first afraid to demonstrate. Women cadres helped them to get over their fears.

Cadres work especially among the poor. They must know the people's suffering, and organize to aid and resist. Rich people can also be organized and be patriotic, but to work with the poor one



law, we make use of this law. For example, under the French we launched a struggle in the National Assembly, and demanded more schools, hospitals and democratic rights.

Q. How is your cadre system organized? How does it function, organize groups, etc.?

A. While working underground we divide into groups. Each group knows their own members, and each has a leader. Between two groups, only two people know each other and make decisions. In this way spies can uncover only the one group. In South Vietnam we have organized demonstrations of 100,000 people, through such groups.

must live as the poor.

Different groups can undertake different tasks, according to their ability and desires. For example, different people go to pagodas, churches, to make clothes, and to aid pregnant women. Gradually they educate people, raise their consciousness. Step by step they draw them into activity according to their interests - to run schools, build new roads, and so on. At all times they must attend to the daily needs of the masses; then they can lead them in struggle and develop a large number of cadres. We choose those with higher consciousness, to give them new tasks.

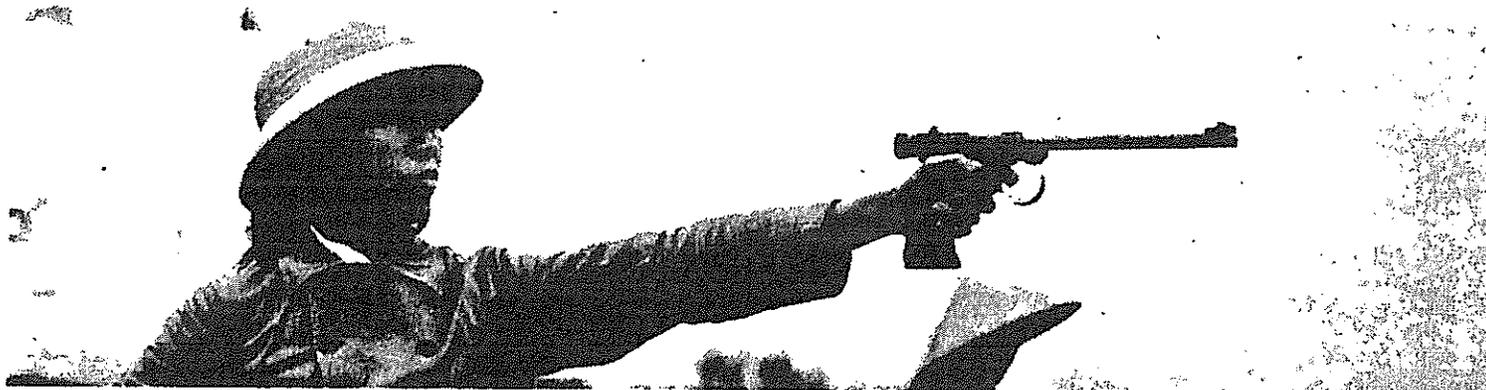
Cadres are chosen according to their ability, and given tasks suitable to their age and sex. Propaganda work is especially good for the young. The youth are a shock-force.

Cadres above all must be cautious and vigilant.

Under the French we began our struggle in the high plateau, among the minority people. They sharpened their teeth, had different customs from us. Ho Chi Minh had returned after 20 years abroad. We began there because the minorities were most oppressed and willing to struggle. The first step was to let them know who their enemy was, why they were poor, oppressed. Oppression was everywhere; that was why the minorities joined with us to defeat the enemy. Our cadres had to live entirely as they did.

experiences and realms of struggle of North American "movement" women.

Voice of Women and Women Strike for Peace represent mainly older, middle class, white, liberal anti-war tendencies. VOW national officers were invaluable in obtaining the visas of the Indochinese guests and accompanying them on their tour, and individual VOW/WISP women performed feats of coordination and service work. VOW and WISP opened their conference to other delegates and invited men and women representatives of anti-war, labor union and poor people's groups. These meetings were, however, rather poorly attended. The strength of VOW/WISP women was their orderliness and the fact that they never forgot the goal of the conference - working to end the war - which some delegates in Women's Liberation seemed to find hard to remember.



One thing is clear: the oppressed join the revolution because the revolution will change their life.

Cadres must make the masses love them. This is a question of principle. If the masses love the cadres, they will listen to what they say and give them protection. That is why one must be exemplary. One must be exemplary in sacrifices. One must be the first to give one's life, and the last to get rewards.

The North American Delegates

In contrast to the Indochinese, American and Canadian delegates showed much disunity, reflecting the different

Third World women presented a different outlook on the world. Frankly revolutionary, bringing with them an acute sense of day-to-day oppression, most of the Third World groups gave an impression of internal unity, discipline and political seriousness. These qualities, as some of them pointed out, came from their sense that, like the Indochinese, they are struggling for their physical survival and their survival as peoples. Their experiences of racism, together with their concern to preserve their own unity, seemed to make many Third World women mistrust the white delegates and find it hard to socialize with them. At least part of this mistrust was, I think, justified by the anti-war and Women's Liberation groups' earlier

failure to give a central place to Third World women in the conference until they were directly challenged to do so. Nevertheless, bridges were built and good relations established between some white and Third World groups and delegates.

Women's Liberation delegates were the most disparate and disorganized. In part this may have resulted from the varying class backgrounds of participants. Delegates, mostly in their teens and twenties, included women on Welfare and clerical and industrial workers as well as students, teachers, and others from professional occupations. More disorganizing, perhaps, was the ultra-democracy prevalent in much of the white North American Left and the failure of many members to recognize the need for leadership, organization, and conventions of public as distinct from

tered as women by associating only with women and, as far as possible, avoiding all forms of institutionalized power or authority. The immediate concerns of these women were the most remote from those of the Indochinese.

(b) "Anti-imperialist" women see women's issues as part of a larger struggle against capitalism and imperialism to achieve some form of socialism. These women are divided on tactics, though not antagonistically. Some think the most important work for women can go on in women's groups organized mainly around women's problems such as day-care for children, abortion, birth-control, women's legal rights and women's employment. Others, like most of the Third World delegates, work chiefly in organizations of both men and women. The most painful conflicts among the socialist women were sectarian ones,



small-group behavior.

What emerged is that Women's Liberation is not presently a political movement but a collection of local groups. These are linked by concern for discrimination against women, but divided in goals and beliefs. Three main groups appeared:

(a) "Radical feminists", including some but not all radical Lesbians, believe that the oppression of women is the main oppression in western (or perhaps in all) societies. Apart from female equality, it was not clear what goals these women sought in society at large. They seemed to be trying to solve the problems they had personally encoun-

especially between Marxist tendencies.

(c) Many delegates had joined women's, poor people's, or other special-issue groups out of a sense of oppression and a need to struggle for particular reforms, or else did not belong to an organization but had been invited in order that as broad a range of women as possible might meet the Indochinese. Most of these women had not yet placed their concerns in a broader perspective, and some were bewildered and alienated by the ideological conflicts they met.

Cross-cutting their own divisions, most Canadian delegates shared a sense that, in their ardor to claim identification with the Indochinese, many U.S.

delegates forgot that they were guests in a foreign country. Phrases like "Welcome to our country"⁹ and "In this country, we..." grated on Canadians, who are becoming increasingly alert to U.S. imperialism in Canada. But in general, the serious purpose of the conference and the friendship generated by it overrode such feelings.

Despite the disunity, there was a widespread longing for unity and for clarification of goals. The fact that this conference took place twenty miles north of the border, amid fear of repression, and that such diverse groups completed their work successfully, was a great achievement. Women came to learn about the Indochinese and how they look at the world. They did learn, and few can have left without feeling strengthened in their resolve to end the war. Viewed from here,

on April 6th, and an open plenary at UBC on April 2nd.

3. Voice of Women and Women Strike for Peace sponsored a successful but much smaller conference with Vietnamese women in 1969. The 1971 conference was first proposed by American members of Women's Liberation groups, who asked VOW/WISP women to help them to make the arrangements. Women of Third World organizations requested a separate conference on the grounds that they had not been consulted, even though their communities bear the brunt of American imperialism within the U.S.A. and are foremost in the struggle against it. Third World delegates included, among others, members of Los Siete de la Raza, the Soledad and Angela Davis Defense Committees, Los Angeles Asian Involvement, San Francisco Red Guards, and Native Canadian and Chinese Youth Associations in Vancouver. A message of solidarity from Angela Davis



the size, determination and courage of the U.S. Spring demonstrations suggest that the goal is attainable.

Vancouver, B.C.
May 1971.

NOTES

1. Press statement by the Indochinese, March 31st.

2. The UBC [University of British Columbia] Student Union provided conference rooms free of charge, and the Student Unions of Simon Fraser University and Vancouver City College helped to finance the conference. Teach-ins took place at the latter two colleges

was read to the conference.

4. See Wilfred Burchett, The Second Indochina War, International Publishers, 1970, pp. 151-155, for references to Quinim Pholsena and his death. Jacques Decornoy mentions Khemphet Pholsena in "Laos: the Forgotten War", Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, April-July 1970, p. 21.

5. Part of the information given is contained in The Indochina Story (Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, Bantam, 1970), which was sold at the conference and which the Indochinese much appreciate.

6. Press conference, March 31st.

7. Unfortunately, workshop discussions, unlike the personal stories and public meetings, were not taped. I

have reconstructed workshop discussions from extensive notes by several people, but they are not transcribed verbatim.

The Canadian press reported that workshops in Toronto had been closed for security reasons. This was untrue in Vancouver and I suspect in Toronto as well. VOW/WISP workshops were open. Third World workshops were open to non-white men and women but closed to white people because Third World women lacked the time and space for the large numbers of white people who would have wished to attend their sessions. Women's Liberation workshops were open only to regional delegates, whose number had been restricted in advance to 200 because of billeting problems and because of the wish to keep workshops of manageable size. Personal security was provided for the Indochinese by groups organized by Third World women,



and separately by the Vancouver police.

Workshops groups were divided among the different delegations from Indochina. Where two national delegations are reported as answering the same question, these answers were taken from separate workshop reports. They were not, therefore, part of the same discussion and did not influence each other.

8. See Burchett, The Second Indochina War, pp. 88-95. Burchett estimates the Lao Lum plainsdwellers at about one million. They comprise the peasants, artisans, nobles and literati of the Laotian kingdom. The Lao Theung and Lao Xung comprise some 30 different tribes. In Vietnam and Cambodia tribes-

people form about 8 percent of the population.

9. Spoken by a California delegate who greeted the Indochinese at the opening of the Women's Liberation conference.

FOUR POINTS AND ONE QUESTION FOR THE AMERICAN ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT FROM THE P.R.G.

The following important points emerged from a July meeting between representatives of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam and the CCAS delegation visiting China. We would like to pass them on for the consideration and action of others working to end the war and American involvement in Indochina.

1. Following a lengthy discussion of the U.S. peace movement including analysis of its splits and divisions, the Vietnamese reiterated one overriding theme, "unify, unify, unify."

2. Study the Pentagon Papers in order to gain a deepened understanding of the history of the American aggression in Vietnam.

3. Study the PRC's July Seven-Point Peace Proposal and understand its significance in the light of the present stage of the struggle.

4. Learn from the anti-war GI's. They have been there, they have seen the war crimes. They understand the horrors of the war and their understanding leads them to oppose the war in creative ways.

Following the lengthy and cordial discussion, one member of the Vietnamese delegation told the group that in discussing the war with many visiting delegations, he had repeatedly asked a single question. "I'll ask it to you," he said, "in hope of getting a response. For the answer would not only end the war but greatly increase the understanding between our two peoples." His question was this: *HOW CAN A SMALL COUNTRY DEFEAT A BIG COUNTRY? HOW CAN A WEAK COUNTRY DEFEAT A STRONG COUNTRY?*