

RECONCILIATION WITH VIETNAM

by Observer

Reconciliation with Vietnam and its heroic and long-suffering people come at last. President Bill Clinton has agreed to normalise US-Vietnam relations.

From Indochina to Vietnam, the country had a tortuous history of struggle for liberation against foreign domination -- Chinese, French, Japanese, American.

During World War II, the valiant Indochinese people fought against Japanese occupation. With the defeat of the Japanese, Vietnam, like Berlin, was partitioned to maintain big-powers harmony : the socialists/communists in the North and the capitalists in the South.

COLONIALISM

The colonial powers - the French in Indochina, the Dutch in Indonesia and the British in Malaya -- who had been evicted during the war by the Japanese, decided to return and reimpose their strangehold.

2.

Rationalisation for the reimposition of colonial rule was dramatically ~~put~~ by a British member of Parliament. In a debate in the House of Commons, he said that if Malaya fell, the British people would have to do without breakfast. Malaya, with her tin and rubber, was Britain's main dollar earner. The Dutch and the French took the same position.

This led to national liberation wars and brutal suppression. Gurkha troops and Dyak head-hunters were used in Malaya. A price of 30,000 pounds sterling was offered for the capture of Chin Peng, dead or alive, -- Chin Peng had earlier been honoured on Victory Day (V-E) Parade in London for his heroism against Japanese aggression and occupation.

#### LIBERATION

Sukarno expelled the Dutch from Indonesia and in 1955 organised the famous Bankung Conference, the <sup>de</sup>precessor to the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1961.

The French were disastrously defeated in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu, the socalled impregnable military base in Vietnam.

3.

The Geneva Conference in 1954 agreed that elections should be held in 1956 for the unification of North and South Vietnam.

But the administration of President Dwight Eisenhower cancelled the elections and installed Ngo Dinh-Diem as head of the South Vietnamese government. The cancellation was done because the communists would have won, and Vietnam would have become a united nation. This was made clear by Eisenhower in his book, Mandate for Change : the White House Years, : "...had elections been as of the time of the fighting, possibly 80 percent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader rather than Chief of State, Bao Dai."

STRATEGIC

Eisenhower's strategic and political concern about Southeast Asia was expressed at the Annual Conference of Governors in 1953, a year before the disastrous defeat of the French in Vietnam, when he had bluntly stated:

"...Now let us assume that we lost Indochina. If Indochina goes several things happen right away. The Malaya Peninsula, the last little bit of land hanging on down there, would be scarcely

defensible. The tin and tungsten we so greatly value from that area would cease coming...

"All of that position around there is very ominous to the United States, because finally if we lost all that, how would the free world hold the rich empire of Indonesia?"

"So you see, somewhere along the line, this must be blocked and it must be blocked now, and that's what we are trying to do.

"So when the United States voted \$400,000,000. to help that war, we are out to prevent the occurrence of something that would be of a most terrible significance to the USA, our security, our power and ability to get certain things we need from the riches of the Indonesia territory and from Southeast Asia."

✓ The United States was not unduly concerned so long as the French controlled <sup>China</sup> ~~Indonesia~~. But after the defeat of France, <sup>Vietnam and</sup> ~~the whole~~ Southeast area assumed strategic importance.

#### RAW MATERIALS

The importance of raw materials for the US economy was emphasised in 1952 in the Report of the Materials Policy Commission, headed by William S. Paley, which had noted that the "United States

5.

appetite for raw materials is gargantuan - and so far, insatiable". In 1900, US produced 15 per cent more raw materials that it consumed; by 1950, the position was reversed - it consumed 9 per cent more than it produced. And it was projected that the position would worsen later; by 1975, it consumed about 20 per cent more!

*that one*  
It is in this context, must be viewed the overthrow of the democratically-elected governments of Mohammad Mossadegh in Iran, PPP in British Guiana and Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala and US armed intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965.

As regards Iran, after the downfall of the Mossadegh Government in June 1953, Nelson Rockefeller in a report to President Eisenhower stated: "We should not ignore the vital fact that virtually all our natural rubber, manganese, chromium and tin, as well as substantial proportions of our zinc, copper and oil and a third or more of the lead and aluminum we need comes from abroad, and, furthermore, that it is chiefly drawn from the underdeveloped areas of Africa and Asia, which are in the orbit of one or other of the military alliances built by the U.S. This

is also true of a major part of our super-strategic material (uranium ore particularly).

u The most significant example in practice of what I mean, was the Iranian experiment with which, as you will remember, I was directly concerned. By the use of economic aid we succeeded in getting access to Iranian Oil and we are now well established in the economy of that country. The strengthening of our economic position in Iran has enabled us to acquire control over her entire foreign policy and in particular to make her join the Baghdad Pact. At the present time the Shah would not dare even to make any changes in his Cabinet without consulting our Ambassador."

#### MONOPOLY

Just before the overthrow by British troops in October 1953 of the PPP Government, an American Congressman D.L. Jackson was a house guest of the Governor. He stated on the eve of his departure that British Guiana was within the strategic zone of the United States with valuable resources like high-grade bauxite and other minerals.

As in Iran, the CIA claimed credit for the overthrow in 1954 by Colonel Castillo-Armas of the Arbenz Government, in

the interest of the powerful monopoly, the United Fruit Company. This company dominated Guatemala just as Booker, McConnell and Company Ltd did in British Guiana (British Guiana was called Booker's Guiana).

Like Colonel Perez Jimenez who had overthrown in 1945 the elected Romulo Gallegos Government in Venezuela, Castillo-Armas was rewarded by the Eisenhower administration. He was given an honorary doctorate degree by the University of Columbia during Eisenhower's term as President of the institution - an award which so infuriated Romulo Gallegos that he renounced the doctorate degree conferred on him by the same university.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

The war in Vietnam was escalated by the Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon administration. Under President Jimmy Carter, the USA ~~abandoned the~~ <sup>softened its</sup> "Big Stick" and embarked on a Human Rights Crusade.