

A year-and-a-half ago, the Tet Offensive demonstrated what had been rumored in the mass media and claimed in the left-wing underground press. The "enemy" in Vietnam was much more powerful and popular than we had suspected. What are the reasons for this popularity? What is the National Liberation Front? What is the newly-formed Provisional Revolutionary Government?

In the early sixties, several years after the Viet Minh, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, had driven the Japanese and French from Vietnam, and years after President Eisenhower rejected the Geneva Accord, a group of Vietnamese nationalists got together to form the National Liberation Front. The NLF has always been a "united front" of labor, religious, and political organizations, but most of its leadership has come from the men and women of the Communist Party of South Vietnam. Basing itself in the rural areas where the Viet Minh had always been strong, the NLF grew quickly and by 1964 was fighting a major guerilla war.

The Front has drawn much of its support from its exemplary action against invading troops, but the real secret to its success is its ability to serve the people of South Vietnam. NLF social action programs became the model for the Saigon and U.S. governments' development of "civil action" and "pacification" teams, but the pro-Saigon programs--hypocritically aimed at winning the people, not serving them--could not compete. The NLF, over its nine-year existence, has pursued a comprehensive program of land reform. Even the Stanford Research Institute, in a study for AID, admitted that "it would appear that in Viet Cong-controlled areas most of the land has been redistributed--which is interpreted to mean that in these areas, landlordism has been abolished by the Viet Cong." Again, imitative Saigon programs have done little.

If it is true, as most Vietnam experts claim, that the NLF is doing a better job of social action and land reform in Vietnam, then one must ask why do we not support the NLF? Most Vietnamese seem to. And, after all, most of the people in Vietnam are still Vietnamese.

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This year the NLF took two important steps forward in their campaign to drive out the United States and its "allies" and Vietnamese supporters. First, NLF military successes have allowed the Front to consolidate its power over the "liberated areas" which cover much of Vietnam's rural areas. The NLF is no longer a guerilla insurgent army. It is a government, supplying public services to much of Vietnam.

Secondly, the leadership of the urban left and Buddhist communities formed the Alliance of Nationalist, Democratic, and Peace Forces early this year, and announced their solidarity with the rurally-based--though active in many urban areas--NLF.

These two developments are the basis of the formation of the Provisional Revolutionary Government, a coalition government for much of Vietnam, under the leadership of the National Liberation Front. The PRG has put forward a twelve-point program for Vietnam.

We in SDS believe in self-determination for Vietnam. We believe that the NLF and PRG have the support, and represent the interests, of all but a small elite of military-men, businessmen, and former landlords. We ask you to support the NLF and PRG, and work for a Vietnamese victory--military or negotiated--as the only reasonable solution to the War on Vietnam.

(watch for copies of the Twelve-Point Program of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam--they'll be out soon)

Stanford SDS Committee on War and Imperialism