

CONFERENCE HEMISPHERIQUE



North Vietnamese and National Liberation Front Delegations at the Conference.

by David McCaughna

A CRUCIAL CHANGE FOR THE WORSE?

The Hemispheric Conference to End the War in Vietnam, held over three days in Montreal last week, was conceived as a congress for those throughout the western hemisphere who are actively involved in the struggle for peace in Vietnam. The brochure sent to delegates before the conference made it sound as if it would be a cool, intelligent look at the methods available to promote peace and to emphasize the necessity to intensify the struggle for peace. But the conference, born out of the idea of peace, changed directions radically during the course of the three days, and ended up approving the concept of violent revolution throughout the world to overthrow capitalism, imperialism, and tyranny in general.

All shades of left-wing philosophies were represented. From fashionably left-liberal university students to out of date grey-haired remnants of the old left of the '30s. There were the vociferous Maoists, Trotskyites, Stalinists, Quebec Separatists, and, most importantly, the Black Panthers. With such a wide, incongruous mixture the conference which was intended to consolidate all on the left in the struggle for peace in Vietnam turned into a violent struggle between the various factions and only emphasized the fragmented, bickering nature of the left which has hindered its progress for many years.

ON THE FIRST MORNING

On the first morning of the conference, held in St James United Church, just prior to the opening speech, there was a hint of what was to follow. Just before Senator Coleman Young began his speech a group of American Maoists paraded to the front of the pulpit carrying North Vietnamese flags and holding the inevitable 'little red book.'

Coleman's opening speech was relatively unexciting. He insisted that peace must be brought to Vietnam (he, like many others during the three days, did not seem to realize that they were already speaking to the converted) and that the "United States can be compelled to end the war and get out of Vietnam." He called for "full rights to self-determination with no qualifications whatsoever for the South Vietnamese." He suggested that the day of Richard Nixon's inauguration be used as a day of widespread protest.

Laurier LaPierre, chairman of the opening day, read out telegrams sent to the conference from people like Eugene McCarthy and Mrs. Martin Luther King. And then Rabbi Feinberg of Toronto spoke and told delegates that "peace for Vietnam will come only on the basis of the Geneva Agreement which means all foreign troops must withdraw from Vietnam." Feinberg urged the mostly youngish audience "not to write off everyone over 30" and displayed a dragon walking stick presented to him by Ho Chi Minh.

Heading the delegation from North Vietnam was Hoang Minh Giam, Minister of Culture. The kindly elderly gentlemen said that his nation does not recognize the Saigon government and asked that "the Vietnamese people be allowed to settle the situation for themselves." His speech was interrupted by great ovations.

He told black delegates that "The people of Vietnam support you against the neo-colonialist aggressor and racial prejudice in all its forms." He insisted that the Vietnamese war be settled

"according to the programme of the National Liberation Front."

His speech was followed by a mass chanting of the stock 'Ho-Ho-Ho Chi Minh' slogan.

LUNCH

During the lunch break the group calling themselves the 'Radical Caucus' met and then presented the Conference with the demand that Bobby Seale, President of the Black Panther Party be brought to address the conference as promised. The radicals asked that the tone of the conference be changed to one supporting the third world liberation movement and demanded that the official name be changed to Conference to Defeat American Imperialism.

Following the radicals came George Ponte, a lieutenant in the Black Panther Party. He demanded that the conference immediately raise \$1200 to bring Bobby Seale and his bodyguards to Montreal for the conference or it would be destroyed. A collection was taken amongst the audience and \$600 was raised.

LATE AFTERNOON

Late in the afternoon the Panthers followed by white radicals and some Quebec separatists stormed the pulpit in an attempt to take over the conference to assert their demands. A wild, fist-slashing furor broke out accompanied by violent audience reaction. Finally the radicals were calmed and Hal Mercer of the Panthers was allowed to speak. He accused the conference or-



Delegate at the Conference

Personalities affect ideas just as much as rational analysis, as David McCaughna (W11) learned at the Hemispheric Conference. Duncan McKie snapped the photos.

Hemispheric Conference to end the war in Vietnam

not Westmoreland

An interview with General Wastemoreland

by Gary Woodill

One of the more interesting characters at the recent Hemispheric Conference to End the War in Vietnam was a man who called himself General WasteMoreland, a clown who added comic relief to an otherwise dull conference. The General, whose real name is Tom Dunphy, went around making undeclared speeches at undeclared times in undeclared places. He gave out several press releases and made frequent visits to the press room, announcing that he was going to arrest War at 4:00 pm that day or that he had renamed the Washington Monument — The National Erection Screwing the World.

Excalibur reporter Gary Woodill managed to grab the General in the hallway and got this brief but exclusive interview.

EXCALIBUR: General, could you tell us what's in your bag?

WASTEMORELAND: Sorry, this is all top secret. Actually, the whole thing is I'm top secret myself. If anyone asks you if General WasteMoreland has been here today, its OK if you tell them. I don't mind if you slip, as long as you remind them that I'm top secret. I'm the only delegate to come up from the Pentagon, from a secret division of the Pentagon. In fact I'm so secret, you know, everybody knows about the CIA — what they're doing all over the world, the Center of International Assassination. But, you know, they of course don't know what I'm doing yet. See, my policy is, basically, that as long as President Johnson wages an undeclared, therefore an unconstitutional war, I'll continue to give undeclared speeches at undeclared places at undeclared times.

EXCALIBUR: This is what you're doing, is it?

WASTEMORELAND: That's right. I'm actually up here also, I heard that the CIA was going to send War up here disguised as a peacenik. They're sending War up here to infiltrate the conference and I'm trying to find War so that I can arrest it. I'm also up here on an official capacity to arrest War.

EXCALIBUR: Have you found War yet?

WASTEMORELAND: Well, I haven't found it yet. I'm still looking. If you find it, point it out to me.

EXCALIBUR: Wasn't there a bit last night

(referring to the clash between the conference administrators and the Black Panthers—White Radicals)

WASTEMORELAND: Well, there was, ah, the feelings are very strong on many sides. There's a great deal of frustration and of course this is what war causes. War frustrates everybody; war starves people; it destroys people; it destroys private property; it destroys everything that is good or human or noble or creative. That's why I'm out to destroy war. I've openly declared that I'll assassinate war as soon as I can get my hands on it. I was the first General who said, "let war die and let the people live." Now that makes sense. I said wouldn't you rather see war lying on the ground with its little face all napped and its little arms all defoliated rather than any of you beautiful people here. Fair is fair, isn't it?

EXCALIBUR: Right, but shouldn't the people who want peace be setting an example of peace instead of fighting among themselves?

WASTEMORELAND: Well, of course. As I say, there's a great deal of frustration. You know, so people from the United States, especially the youth, feel that these changes should have come a long time ago; that the society is way behind, maybe, I don't know, how many hundreds of years behind the times; that we've developed to a point where we're ready to blow the world up. So you see, a lot of people, people who come up here at a great sacrifice and have been starving and everything in their own home towns and have big rats running around their houses in the wealthiest country in the world are a little bit disappointed, to say the least, you see. I attack the stupidity and the inhumanity through humor, through satire, as an internationally known author and an actor, you know, I've been all over the world, entertaining, acting, etc., etc. I'm attacking war that way.

EXCALIBUR: Have you been entertaining the troops?

WASTEMORELAND: I've offered to go on the USO. I've put in my application. I'll be willing to go anytime. The only thing is as soon as I offered to go to South Vietnam to entertain the troops, most of the troops demanded to come home immediately.

EXCALIBUR: Thank you.

WASTEMORELAND: OK, carry on.



George Ponte of The Black Panther Party addressing the Conference. He 'suggested' the conference would be destroyed unless . . . (read the article).

ganisers of trickery and racism in not providing the means for Seale to attend as they had promised. Later the chairman promised the additional \$600 to bring Seale to Montreal.

THAT NIGHT

That night the radical caucus met at McGill and the following day presented delegates with their resolutions. Their platform read: "The organisers of this conference have never mentioned the fact that the conference itself is being held in a U.S. colony-Quebec. They never talk of the need for Canadians, Quebecois, Black Americans and Latin Americans to liberate themselves from the grip of U.S. imperialism. They do not oppose U.S. imperialism. We Do." Now the lines had been clearly drawn between the slogan shouting, adequately tattered radicals and the 'McCarthyesque liberals' like some little old ladies I'd met earlier in the day who came because they were so concerned about the nasty goings on in Vietnam and were "having such a good time in Montreal."

The radicals set out their planks:

The Anti-Imperialist Caucus:

1. Calls for the defeat of U.S. imperialism by the armed struggle of all the world's peoples.
2. Calls for the victory of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam.
3. Condemns the aggression of the Soviet social imperialists against Czechoslovakia; the Soviet-U.S. "sphere of influence" collusion to redivide the world and Dubeek's collaboration with U.S. and West German imperialists.
4. Support the rights of Quebec to freedom and independence.
5. Support the just struggle of the Black people in America for their liberation.
6. Condemns U.S. economic, political and cultural domination of Canada and calls on Canadians to struggle for their freedom and sovereignty.
7. Supports the national struggle of the peoples of Latin America.

Saturday morning the Conference got back, more or less, to the main concern — Vietnam. The delegation from the National Liberation Front arrived bringing "greetings and gratitude of the South Vietnamese people" to the delegates and the speaker asserted that "U.S. war-mongers persist in aggression against South Vietnamese people when they desire independence, freedom and peace." The NFL speaker insisted that the U.S. has failed miserably in Vietnam — "they have clashed with the invincible will of the people." It was a touching moment when a delegate from the NFL presented the conference with a gift of a flower vase made from a U.S. bomb and when the North Vietnamese offered a little sculpture made from part of a downed U.S. plane.

The radicals succeeded in having the seminar topics scheduled for the afternoon altered from Vietnam-orientated to more general and widespread ones. There were fascinating topics like: Counterinsurgency Techniques (violent and nonviolent, military and paramilitary) used in Vietnam (?) and their relevance to all liberation struggles in the third world (including CIA, AID, Peace Corps, etc.). But the arrival of Bobby

Seale with his troop of fierce looking bodyguards captured the attention of most participants.

Bobby Seale gave an impassioned, blasting speech Sunday morning. He equated the desires of the black peoples with those of the Vietnamese and pointed out the striking parallel between U.S. suppression of the blacks and of the Vietnamese. He stated that the blacks "stand with the Vietnamese" and would deal out violence for violence. He gave the 10 tenets of Black Panther founder Huey Newton (currently in prison) to which the party is dedicated:

- freedom
- employment
- housing
- end to exploitation of black population by white capitalists
- education
- all blacks exempt from military service
- end to police brutality
- release of blacks in prison
- trial of blacks by their fellow blacks.
- United Nations plebiscite to determine the desires of the black people.

MORE TO COME

Seale challenged the audience to become either part of the problem or part of the solution. His speech was followed by the chant "Free Huey Newton, free Huey Newton."

On Sunday the entrance to the college in Longueuil where the conference was held was picketed by demonstrating Maoists, waving flags and shouting out their slogans including "Stop this bogus conference."

The white militant radicals were successful in having the 300 conference delegates pass the resolution they wanted passed. The resolution states: "That the Hemispheric Conference recognizes that anti-communism is being used to suppress aspirations of groups throughout the world. That racism is a threat to world peace." It continues, "The conference recognizes the right of all people to self-determination against racist, colonial policies and favours being actively involved in the struggle not only of the Vietnamese people but also the Afro-Americans, the Spanish-Americans, the American Indians and the French Canadians." The conference pledged to support the fight of Quebec against "U.S. imperialism as manifested through Canadian colonialism."

As a final topping the Black Panther Party and the Quebec Separatists pledged co-operation and brotherhood.

The conference ended with a rousing rendition of the Internationale and to the light of burning draft cards as the audience chanted "hell no, we won't go". And the three days originally intended as a Conference in search of peace which had become violent, often futile, monotonous, and occasionally stimulating came to a close. Old leftists and liberals left confused and angry at the manhandling attitude of the radicals, most radicals left with a feeling of at least some exhilaration and I came back to York determined to continue the struggle to ban recruiting from the campus and to start investigating the rumoured presence of California grapes in the Versafood cafeterias.