

TO AMERICAN SCIENTISTS, ENGINEERS AND TECHNICIANS

17 JUN 70

Dear Colleagues,

We already knew, by exchanging ideas during the course of professional relations that many of you disapprove of the war carried out by the U.S. in Viet-Nam.

Today we attentively follow the growth of the movement of opinion which, in your country, shows its opposition to the continuation of this war, with its horrible consequences.

Not so long ago, our own country was involved in similar wars, first in Viet-Nam, then in Algeria. We, staff people, engineers and technicians, members of C.G.T. Union, at that time, had strongly disapproved of the action of our government and participated in the struggle which led to the opening of negotiations and Peace We believe that the attitude which was then ours entitles us today to freely express our opinion in writing you, without being suspected of narrow nationalistic spirit or systematic anti-Americanism. We are united in the struggle against war which develops in the U.S.A., not only because it has the same meaning as the struggle which we carried out in its time, but also due to the fact that it is in close agreement with that ideal of creators which is that of engineers and technicians and cannot be anything else but common between us.

And then, despite the fact that our country is not involved in the conflict, because, as the poet John Donne said—quoted by your great writer Ernest Hemingway in the preface to "For Whom the Bell Tolls"—:

"No man is an island entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. . . . Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in Mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

We do understand the bitterness you feel in discovering the massacres in Viet-Nam. How can it be, you must think, that American soldiers, who, for you are the perfect image of "defenders of freedom and human dignity" can reach such lows.

Our people has, alas, been confronted with the same questions. We are today capable of answering them: all these wars of oppression have had their parade of atrocities. There is no such a thing as a "clean" war against the will of a whole nation which wants to freely choose its destiny.

We also do understand the anxiety and wrath you feel when seeing the war spread to new areas, the massacres and devastations getting worse, when you had been hoping for an imminent end of the war.

Do not believe that the atrocities you deeply reprobate are an avoidable "accident"; do not believe that an acceleration of the war effort and accumulating destructions can lead to a so-called "victory." Our country, in recent history, has successively been both occupant and occupied. This harsh experience enables us to tell you that there is no possible victory against a nation defending its independence.

There only can be oppression, destruction and atrocities. Neither can you believe those who claim that the USA cannot pull out of the war without loss of prestige: some prestige that the prestige acquired through military force!

By your work of scientists, engineers, technicians, you have made of your country a nation which stands at the head of scientific and technical progress in the world. Discoveries, improvements, a deep sense of the application of industrial development which are your outstanding features are really appreciated by all and more particularly by your French colleagues. That kind of prestige is fully yours and could not be questioned should the USA renounce to support by means of arms a government rejected by its people, meaning by that the south Viet-Name government.

On the contrary, your real friends can be but apprehensive to see the country which has given to mankind the conquest of the Moon, show at the same time the sad display of horrors and atrocities which are characteristic of the colonial wars of yore.

In order that it stop and to avoid dangers of a further extension of the war, we believe that there is but one solution; end of American intervention in Viet-Nam and recognition for its people of the right to freely determine their destiny, right which was recognized by the Geneva Conference in 1954.

We do understand that this appeal can still meet with resistance among you. But it is with optimism that it is addressed to your intention for we know your traditional attachment to freedom and democracy inseparable from Peace.

Rest assured, dear Colleagues, of the solidarity and high regard of your French colleagues in the struggle to stop as soon as possible war and its horrors.

Rene Le Guen, Secretary General
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