

## 50 Years Since the Fall of Saigon — Build the Movement to Liberate Palestine

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#),  
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Theme: [History](#), [Law and Justice](#), [Society](#)

*“Saigon liberated! A victory for all humanity”, was the cover headline of Australian socialist publication Direct Action (DA) on May 2, 1975. DA (forerunner of Green Left) joined the worldwide celebrations for the historic victory of the Vietnamese people and the National Liberation Front (NLF) over the United States-backed puppet regime in South Vietnam.*

Rallies were organised across Australia and around the world to celebrate the historic milestone: it was a victory not only for the Vietnamese people, but for the mass, international anti-war movement of the time.

I was a *DA* contributor at the time and wrote about the dramatic events for that special issue:

“On April 30, Vietnamese liberation forces entered the city of Saigon and occupied the presidential palace. This signalled the end of 30 years of bitter struggle by the Vietnamese people to rid their country of imperialist domination.

“The rushed evacuation of the last US military and civilian personnel from Saigon meant the total victory of the liberation armies and was one of the most decisive and far-reaching defeats for the mighty US war machine in history.”

The *Sydney Morning Herald* of May 1, 1975, described the scene as liberation forces moved into the capital:

“Laughing, cheering communist troops entered the presidential palace shouting ‘Hello comrade’ to the bystanders and newsmen.

“Troops moved through the streets with loudhailers declaring: ‘The forces of the National Liberation Front have become masters of Saigon. Do not worry: you will be well treated.’

“Traffic continued in the centre of the capital. People stopped to ask if they could move about freely and were waved on with a smile and a ‘yes’ from the Vietcong soldiers,” the *SMH* reported.

All the available evidence is that the people of Saigon overwhelmingly welcomed the liberation forces. The *Australian* of May 1, 1975, reported:

“People ran into the streets and cheered as dozens of tanks flying Vietcong flags and loaded with communist troops started to rumble into Saigon. The Vietcong soldiers grinned and waved to the crowds.”

The ABC program *PM* on April 30 reported an “air of extraordinary friendliness. The population is strongly favourable to the occupation.”

The NLF and North Vietnamese troops had fought against colonialism for decades. These armed forces, headed by Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese Communist Party leadership in Hanoi, defeated the French colonialists in 1954, forcing them to withdraw their forces in the wake of the victory at Dien Bien Phu.

## **Inspiration**

The Vietnam War changed the course of world history.

The *Australian* described the final days of the puppet regime in the South, noting “the disastrous collapse of South Vietnamese resistance amid almost incredible scenes of treachery, greed and brutality”.

“[There is a] total breakdown of military and civilian authority in the Republic of Vietnam, running battles among fleeing soldiers and with civilians, an absolute paralysis of will on the part of then-President Nguyen Van Thieu, the large-scale treachery of the ruling Vietnamese elite and the presumed fate of 7.4 tonnes of gold worth about \$30 million, as well as additional millions in hard currency reserves.”

*DA's* editorial on May 2, 1975, stated:

“Who can doubt that the oppressed masses of Latin America and Africa will derive a mighty impetus to their struggles from the victory of the popular masses in Vietnam.

“The defeat of the imperialist intervention in Vietnam is also a victory for the international anti-war movement, above all the anti-war movement in the United States itself. The Vietnamese people and their liberation forces acquitted themselves with tremendous heroism on the Indo-China battlefields. But they were rendered decisive assistance by Washington’s inability to bring the full weight of its awesome military power to bear against them.

“The essential reason for this was that the American people tied the hands of their own rulers. Under the impact of the protracted struggle in Indo-China and the ever-larger demonstrations organised by the opponents of the war in the US itself, the vast majority of the American people came to oppose the war.

“A whole new levy of radical youth around the world, especially in the imperialist countries, themselves were awakened to political life, and received a basic anti-capitalist education in the struggle against the imperialist war of intervention in Vietnam.”

The fall of Saigon was symbolic of one people determined to forge their own destiny in the world. North and South Vietnam are now united as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, despite some elements of capitalism re-emerging.

## Lessons for Today

The fall of Saigon and the defeat of US and allied (including Australian) imperialism in Vietnam 50 years ago contains important lessons for today, especially in the context of the determined struggle of the Palestinian people against Israel and its US (and other Western) backers today.

While the specific circumstances are different: the US, Australian and other allies had massive military forces directly involved on the ground in Vietnam, Israel acts today (and has since the 1948 Nakba) as the spearhead of Western imperialism in Palestine and the wider Middle East — nevertheless, with unlimited military backing, supply and political support.

Israel seeks to act with total impunity in its genocidal war against the Palestinians in Gaza, just as the US and its allies sought to do in Indochina in the 1960s and 1970s, and French imperialism tried to do for decades before that.

However, the growing mass movement in support of the Palestinian people around the world, but most importantly in the US itself, is already challenging the Western ruling consensus in support of Israel.

In the turbulent era of Donald Trump's second US presidency, when Western imperialism is descending into a disastrous international trade war, there is a very real prospect of the courageous Palestinian people — supported by a growing global anti-war movement — forcing a major defeat on Israel and its US and allied backers.

The liberation of Vietnam 50 years ago can be a beacon for the Palestinian people and their international defenders today.

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*Featured image: Protesting the Vietnam War at Sydney University (left). Protesting Israel's war on Gaza at Columbia University (right). (Source: Green Left)*

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