

Tet offensive commemorated

Tuesday 12 February 2008, by [MASON Bill](#) (Date first published: 8 February 2008).

"Forty years ago, the Tet offensive — the decisive battle of the Vietnam War — took place, changing the course of the war, and beginning the long retreat of the US military which eventually led to the victory of the Vietnamese revolutionary national-liberation forces with the fall of Saigon in April 1975", Jim McIlroy said at a public forum in Brisbane on January 31, one of a series sponsored by Green Left Weekly.

"On January 31, 1968, fighters of the [North] Vietnamese People's Army and the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF) launched an all-out assault on cities and towns throughout South Vietnam, catching the US and its puppet regime in Saigon completely by surprise, and stunning the world with their courage and audacity", said McIlroy. "The inspiration provided by Tet helped launch a period of revolutionary upsurge and social gains from the late 1960s on an international scale. The Tet offensive is one of the truly history-making events of our time."

McIlroy went on to summarise the events of Tet 1968 in Vietnam, and to draw some lessons of the struggle for the anti-war movement of current times. "The anti-war movement of today can take heart from Tet, just as the anti-Vietnam War movement of the 1960s was given enormous impetus from the events of January-February 1968", he said.

The series of forums commenced with a short video presentation of war footage from the Tet offensive, which gave dramatic impact to the discussion that followed. The footage showed events such as the NLF guerrilla attack on the US embassy in Saigon, an attack that amazed the world and helped undermine popular support for the war in the West.

McIlroy addressed forums in Brisbane, Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. These were attended by audiences ranging 12 and 40 people.

In Brisbane, former Australian soldier Hamish Chitts, now an anti-war activist with the veterans' organisation Standfast, also spoke, explaining the terrible impact of the Vietnam and other wars on Australian and US veterans.

Tran Quoc Khanh, Vietnam's deputy consul, also addressed the Sydney meeting, explaining the continuing impact of Agent Orange and other US war damage on the Vietnamese people today. He called for ongoing solidarity with Vietnam, in its struggle for national and social development.

In Newcastle, Ross Edmonds, historian of the Newcastle Vietnam Moratorium, outlined the key events of the anti-Vietnam War movement in Newcastle and Australia-wide. There, as in the other forums, the audience discussed the lessons of Tet for the anti-war movement today, in opposition to the US and Australian occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

At all the forums, a lively discussion ensued on issues such as the comparison between the Vietnam and Iraq wars, the nature of the anti-war movements then and now, and the role of the mass media in the two periods. There was also discussion on the possibility of organising continuing solidarity with the Vietnamese people.

P.S.

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