

February 25, 1979

Editor
The Washington Post
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Sir,

Your columnist Richard Cohen in the Post on February 25 suggests that someone in authority should apologize to an Iowa woman whose son was killed in Vietnam by admitting to her that there was no cause involved and that his death was therefore meaningless. This seems a curious way to alleviate the sufferings of a mother. Besides, a half-million refugees since 1975 might suggest that Cohen himself should do the apologizing. The fact that a cause may have been ill-served by many, and indeed betrayed by some, and that in the end it failed, does not automatically prove its invalidity. If human happiness, prosperity or freedom are legitimate values, surely few honest minds could suggest that any of them has been advanced by the communist victories in Indochina.

The post-World War II attempts to contain communist expansionism - which, let it be remembered, included respectable ventures like the Marshall Plan, the Berlin airlift and Korea, not just Vietnam - may have been less than fully successful, seen in the light of today's Asia and Africa, but it does not follow that the spread of the communist version of totalitarianism is a good thing which we should apologize for opposing. Indeed, on any humanistic basis, the traditional values of the west, with all our faults, are so incomparably superior to anything to be found in Moscow or Hanoi that it is the communist dictatorships who should today be in the position of trying to contain our ideas, not the other way round. That such is, for a variety of reasons, not now the case is the real index of our failure and is what we all, including Mr. Cohen, should be apologizing for.

Sincerely,



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