

# **VIETNAM**

## **vital issues in the great debate**

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*"There is no dearth of printed material on Vietnam. Much has been written defending U.S. involvement. Much has been written opposing it. In the rash of partisan polemics, little has escaped critical examination. Why, then, this pamphlet on Vietnam? On great issues of foreign policy, all sides deserve a hearing; all arguments warrant dispassionate scrutiny. This has been a guiding principle of the Foreign Policy Association since its founding almost 50 years ago. It is the principle which inspires the pages that follow, reviewing the great debate over U.S. policy in Vietnam."*

Samuel P. Hayes, President

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## A Very Distant Death

The "dirty little war" in Vietnam has become a major conflict—the focus of world apprehension lest it erupt into World War III. A total of well over a million men are engaged on both sides. In the last 12 months we have increased our military personnel in Southeast Asia (including Thailand) to a point where they number over 325,000. The October 1966 draft call-up was the biggest since the Korean war. We have already suffered more than 5,000 dead in Vietnam. Our war bill exceeds \$1 billion monthly and is climbing steadily toward the \$2-billion mark. And meanwhile, our bombs are exploding closer to the Chinese border.

Why does an American boy find himself in a jungle hamlet 10,000 miles from home, in a province called Pleiku, there to risk meeting a sniper's bullet? We say it is because we are committed to the right of the South Vietnamese to self-determination; the adversary says it is because we are intent on interfering with that right. Behind these disarming simplicities lie issues of enormous gravity for ourselves and the world. Is it our duty and in our national interest to contain communism in Asia? Is Vietnam the right place and the war the right way to contain it? If South Vietnam falls to the Communists, will all of Southeast Asia follow? Who is the real enemy: the Communist-controlled National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, North Vietnam or the Communist regime in Peking? Are we risking war with China and/or the Soviet Union? In any case, have we commitments to wage the war which we can break only at the sacrifice of our prestige, our moral standing as a nation and as a people, and our credibility as an ally?

All these issues have proved to be controversial; indeed, there are those who say that because we are at war, no one has the right to pose them any longer. But there are others who deny that blind support of national policy contributes either to genuine unity or the democratic process. So debate continues on all aspects of the conflict: its causes, its tactics, its ultimate purposes. And it is to the pros and cons

that have been advanced in the course of this fateful and wide-ranging national dialogue that this article is addressed.

### DOVE AND HAWK

In broad terms, there are three sides to the debate—the Administration side, those who say that the Administration is under-aggressive in fighting the war and those who say that it is over-aggressive. The two latter schools have come to be called "hawks" and "doves" respectively. To the objective observer, these terms are of limited usefulness, for who is "hawk" and who is "dove" is itself a matter of controversy—often most passionately so to those who are so described. To the Johnson Administration, however, which lays claim to a middle ground, the terms are useful for identifying the direction from which it is being attacked.

From the Administration's viewpoint, then, are the American people, as a whole, hawks or doves? Throughout 1964 and 1965, they were neither; opinion polls showed majorities ranging up to 70 percent supporting the President's "middle" policies. But by midsummer 1966 the polls were showing that the President was losing some of his majority, mostly to the hawks. Today it appears that at least half the American people are urging him either to escalate or de-escalate the war, with the greater number urging the former.

More difficult to determine statistically is the attitude of the country's "elite" or "opinion-makers"—politicians, journalists, clergymen, teachers, intellectuals generally. In Congress, liberal Democrats tend to be doves; many Republicans and conservative Democrats, hawkish. Measured by their willingness to take a public stand, about a score of senators may be classified as doves; in the House, 47 representatives—of whom 44 are Democrats—may perhaps be so classified.

Outside Congress, the most articulate doves are to be found among leftists, pacifists, clergymen, civil rights leaders and the academic community. John Kenneth Galbraith of Harvard, former U.S. ambassador to India, has said that

President Johnson's policy has "failed to convince" the academic community. The widespread "teach-ins" and demonstrations on American campuses, especially in 1965, would seem to bear him out. The polls, however, indicate that the campus doves are more vocal than numerous. The military tend to be hawkish, as does a large segment of the American press. While right-wing intellectuals have produced some extreme hawks, there are also some intellectuals of liberal background who either support the Johnson policy or favor a more rapid escalation of the war.

The President himself has said that the hawks represent a greater threat to his policies than the doves. Nonetheless, under him the conflict has escalated steadily—much faster than some would like, not as fast as others would have it. In this sense, at least, he can be said, relatively, to have chosen a middle way.

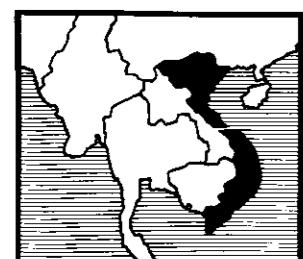
#### A VERY SPECIAL WAR

The war may be just or unjust, but even its staunchest supporters do not claim that it is popular. Its supporters take to the streets only to counter the demonstrations of those who oppose it. The lack of enthusiasm is not surprising; a jungle hamlet in the distant province of Pleiku would seem to be no proper place for an American boy to meet his death. It is, moreover, the kind of war that takes us back to the repugnantly personal and primitive cruelties of our frontier battles. We are not accustomed to thinking of a sharpened stake dipped in poison as a weapon; nor, in counterpoint, can we glory in our own efforts when we hear a GI

cry: "My hardest job is to go in and count the bodies after we've napalmed a village." And this savage war is fought in a distant and alien land among a people so remote from us in appearance, culture and living standards that, by comparison, a Rumanian peasant seems like a blood brother.

The war has no front lines; the border between life and death may be the perimeter of a camp, the edge of a jungle path, the sidewalk in front of a Saigon café. A mountain may belong to one side from dawn to dusk and to the other from dusk to dawn. Friend is often indistinguishable from foe, and both are often indistinguishable from the unarmed peasant. The war is the thunder of jets, a skirmish in a rice paddy, a grenade tossed into a restaurant, a village elder shot through the back, a Buddhist nun wrapping herself in a cloak of flame.

Such is what the Communists call a "war of national liberation." The adversary is at once guerrilla and social revolutionary who, either by terror or persuasion, must win the support of the countryside for his survival. We have never before fought a war like this on so massive a scale, and the perplexities it creates make a shambles of conventional military thinking. Politics becomes inextricably bound up with strategy and tactics; "pacification" becomes a vital word in the vocabulary of the army command. We must win not only battles but loyalties; in the opinion of many, true victory in battle is measured less by the count of enemy dead than by the count of friendly living. And we have found, heartbreakingly, that it is much easier to count the one than the other.



## Why Are We Fighting?

#### THE MORAL ISSUES

On October 1, 1954, President Eisenhower offered to President Ngo Dinh Diem a program of American aid designed to "assist the government of Vietnam in developing and maintaining a strong, viable state, capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means." Seven years later, President Kennedy went even further: "The U.S. is determined that the Republic of Vietnam [South Vietnam]

shall not be lost to the Communists for lack of any support which the U.S. can render."

Do these statements, and other similar ones made by the two American presidents, morally commit us to the war in Vietnam? President Johnson thinks so. "We are there," he told a Johns Hopkins University audience on April 7, 1965, "because we have a promise to keep. Since 1954 every American President has offered support to the people of South Vietnam.

. . . To dishonor that pledge, to abandon this small and brave nation to its enemies and to the terror that must follow, would be an unforgivable wrong."

U.S. sympathy for peoples striving to attain or maintain their freedom and independence is assuredly rooted deep in our traditions. But there are many who deny that either our traditions or the specific nature of the White House pledges to South Vietnam adds up to a moral obligation to wage war in Vietnam. Eisenhower himself, it is pointed out, has since explained that what he had in mind in his 1954 letter to Diem was foreign aid and not a military program. And Kennedy, shortly before his assassination in 1963, told Columbia Broadcasting System correspondent Walter Cronkite: "We can help them [the South Vietnamese], we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisers, but they have to win it—the people of Vietnam—against the Communists." And Hans J. Morgenthau, Chicago University political scientist, stresses that the pledges were made to a Saigon government that, he contends, we ourselves had installed—"our own agent." "I do not regard this," Mr. Morgenthau comments tartly, "as a valid foundation for our presence in South Vietnam."

But however the pledges were meant, it is incontrovertible that they were accepted by a succession of Saigon regimes as an earnest of our determination to support them against Communist aggression. Whether or not these regimes were representative, their understanding of our intent led hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese to commit themselves to the anti-Communist cause. Many Americans feel strongly that we cannot let them down. It is noteworthy that Eisenhower, despite his careful disavowal of warlike intent in 1954, today supports the war wholeheartedly.

Moral issues are involved not only in why we are fighting, but how. We are meeting the often inhuman terror tactics of the enemy with tactics that to some seem equally inhuman: mass bombings, defoliation, the use of weapons with unprecedented killing power, the application of the torch to civilian huts.

"The real moral problem at issue in Vietnam," writes Administration critic Bernard B. Fall in *Viet-Nam Witness 1953-66*, "is that of torture and needless brutality to combatants and civilians alike," and notes that both sides are guilty of "crass and constant violations of the rules of war. . . ."

John P. Roche of Brandeis University, mindful

of the murderous purges perpetrated by the Hanoi regime upon its own people, sees the moral question in another context. Other than pacifism, he writes in *The New Leader*, there would be only one ground for holding that our Vietnamese policy is immoral, namely, "that North Vietnam is a historically progressive regime confronted by a reactionary, imperialist creation in South Vietnam." It should be noted that Roche does not accept this view of the regimes in the North and South and is a vigorous supporter of Administration policy in Vietnam.

#### THE LEGAL ISSUES

The legality as well as the morality of our entry into the Vietnamese war has occasioned fierce debate. The Administration argues that our entry was legally justified by a series of bilateral agreements with South Vietnam and our responsibilities as a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). The SEATO treaty, designed to protect the territorial integrity of its signatories and of certain additional areas, specifically including Vietnam, was signed in 1954 by the U.S., France, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Pakistan and the Philippines.

The arguments against the legality of our participation in the war are elaborated in a memorandum of law on "American Policy Vis-à-Vis Vietnam," issued late in 1965 by the Lawyers Committee on American Policy Towards Vietnam; in March 1966, the Department of State published a brief entitled "The Legality of U.S. Participation in the Defense of Viet-Nam." The following summary of the pros and cons is drawn from these documents.

The memorandum argues that under the Charter of the United Nations, members are barred from any unilateral resort to force; only the Security Council (or, perhaps, the General Assembly by virtue of the Uniting for Peace resolution) may determine the measures to be taken to maintain or restore international peace. Since the UN took no action on Vietnam, we had no right to do so.

True, Article 51 of the Charter grants "the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense" when a UN member is attacked. But, asserts the memorandum, South Vietnam not only lacks UN membership, it isn't even a state, it is merely a "temporary zone" established by the Geneva agreements (see box on page 5). Thus, the infiltrations from North Vietnam cannot be considered an attack according to the Charter, but only an element of civil war. Uni-

lateral intervention in a civil war is barred not only by the UN but, according to the memorandum, by American tradition.

The memorandum argues further that the right of collective self-defense granted by Article 51 presupposes membership in the kind of regional collective system envisaged by the Charter. The authors deny that SEATO, which joins the U.S. to a region thousands of miles distant to which it lacks any historic or ethnic connection, is such a system. Rather, it is a "legalistic artificial formulation" invented by former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to circumvent the UN limitations on unilateral action. "A buffalo cannot be transformed into a giraffe," say the authors, "however elongated its neck may be stretched." In any case, SEATO cannot be used to justify our policy, since the UN forbids any enforcement action under regional arrangements "without the authorization of the Security Council."

The memorandum goes on to say that while the U.S. did not approve of everything in the Geneva agreements, it nevertheless pledged to "refrain from threat or the use of force to disturb" the provisions, and promised that we would not "join in any arrangement which will hinder" the reunification of Vietnam. By entering the war, assert the authors, the U.S. has broken both pledges.

Finally, says the memorandum, our entry into the war violates our own Constitution, which reserves to Congress the right to declare war.

#### THE CASE FOR LEGALITY

The State Department's brief meets these challenges head on. Nothing in the UN charter, it asserts, denies the right, long recognized in international law, of individual and collective self-defense against armed attack. Since the Charter itself describes this right as "inherent," rather than Charter-bestowed, it accrues to all states, whether UN members or not. Assuredly, South Vietnam enjoys this right. It has been recognized as a separate international entity by approximately 60 governments; it is a member of several UN specialized agencies; only a Soviet veto frustrated its formal admission to the world body. Under these conditions, infiltration from the North cannot be considered merely an element of civil war, but aggression by an outside power. But even considered as a "temporary zone," South Vietnam could not legally be attacked by forces from another zone. The UN showed this by its decisions on Korea.

The brief cites various Charter articles to show

that the U.S. would have the right to help South Vietnam defend itself even if the UN did not exist. And while it is true that the UN Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace, Article 51 of the Charter clearly states that the right of self-defense may be exercised "until the Security Council" has taken the necessary measures. Since the Security Council has taken no action (even though in January 1966 we formally requested its intervention), the right of individual and collective defense against armed attack continues.

As for the Geneva agreements, the brief argues that the North Vietnamese were the first to violate them. This gave us the right to suspend our own compliance in accordance with the principle in international law that breach of an agreement by one party entitles the other to an equivalent breach. And finally, the brief defends the President's right to order our troops into combat in Vietnam without a congressional declaration of war on the following grounds: (1) that as Commander-in-chief of the armed forces, he has the power to deploy troops abroad to maintain American security; (2) the SEATO treaty, ratified by the Senate, justified such action; and (3) the congressional joint resolution of August 10, 1964, which supported the President's determination "to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the U.S. and to prevent further aggression," clearly justified the President's subsequent actions. And the brief recalls that beginning with the "undeclared war" with France in 1798-1800, there have been at least 125 prior instances in which presidents have ordered our forces into battle or to maintain positions abroad, without a congressional declaration of war.

#### THE STRATEGIC ISSUES

Some observers insist that neither morality nor legality were factors in our decision to fight in Vietnam. "Combat troops were sent," writes Richard N. Goodwin, a former special assistant to President Johnson, "because our national interest, in the judgment of our leaders, required their presence, and for no other reason." It is in our national interest, supporters of the war argue, that Southeast Asia be withheld from the Communists, and it also argued that the key to the defense of the area lies, under present circumstances, in Vietnam.

Overt expression of this strategic concept was given by President Eisenhower in 1953 in justification of our financial support for France's war against the predecessors of the Vietcong, the

Vietminh: "If Indochina goes, several things happen right away. The peninsula . . . would be scarcely defensible. The tin and tungsten that we so greatly value from that area would cease coming."

A year later—and only four days after the Geneva agreements ended France's effort to contain communism in that area—the concept was put into sharper focus by Eisenhower's Secretary of State Dulles: "The important thing from now on is not to mourn the past but to seize future opportunities to prevent the loss in North Vietnam from leading to the extension of communism throughout Southeast Asia . . ."

In 1959 Eisenhower again pictured the results of a Communist conquest of South Vietnam: "The remaining countries of Southeast Asia would be menaced by a great flanking movement . . . The loss of South Vietnam would set in motion a crumbling process that could, as it progressed, have grave consequences for us and for freedom."

What Eisenhower called the "crumbling process" has since been encompassed in the "domino theory," a major thesis in the pro-Administration argument. It holds that the Vietnam struggle is a test case for the "wars of liberation" upon which both Peking and Moscow have set their seals of approval; that a Communist victory in Vietnam would show us up as a "paper tiger," with the result that neighboring countries, their confidence in us shattered, would quickly fall into Communist hands; and that a Communist-dominated Indochinese peninsula would ultimately force Japan and the Philippines into a neutralist stance that would, in turn,

constrict our defense line to Hawaii, Alaska and the West Coast—"too close," as *U.S. News & World Report* has put it, "for comfort."

Related to this concept is the conviction that there exists a confluence of interests between Hanoi and Peking; and that Communist China would exploit a Vietcong victory to further its own aggressive aims, which include not only Asian hegemony, but also leadership of a "third world" revolt against the capitalist West and a "revisionist" Soviet bloc.

This whole strategic concept is challenged by many observers. Recent history, it is said, flatly disproves the domino theory: no country followed the Soviet Union into communism in 1917 or China in 1949; no neighbor emulated North Vietnam in 1954, or Cuba in 1960. "The 'domino theory,'" writes Professor Morgenthau, "is but a replica of a vulgar Marxism which also believes in the inevitable spread of communism." The theory is held to be invalid even in reverse, i.e., that by stopping communism anywhere, it is discouraged elsewhere. Communism, stopped in Greece, the Philippines and Korea, for instance, went on to succeed in Cuba and North Vietnam, and temporarily threatened Indonesia. "They little know the hydra," comments Walter Lippmann, "who think that the hydra has only one head and that it can be cut off."

From this it follows, say critics of Administration strategy, that Vietnam's importance has been vastly exaggerated; even a Communist victory there would be no catastrophe. Indeed, some American observers argue that a Communist Vietnam might prove a stronger barrier to Chinese expansionism than any Saigon regime

#### Geneva Agreements

The agreements reached at the Geneva conference (May to July, 1954) ended the French-Indochina war and France's 60-year domination over the area. Participants were Britain and the Soviet Union (as joint chairmen), France, the U.S., Communist China, Cambodia, Laos, the French-sponsored state of (South) Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam.

With regard to Vietnam, two documents emerged. The first was an agreement on cessation of hostilities; it provided for (a) the country's partition into two zones along the 17th parallel pending reunification through general elections; (b) withdrawal of French troops from the North; (c) 300 days for Vietnamese to exercise the right to move North or South, as they chose; (d) a ban on increasing military material or personnel in either zone; (e) creation of an International Control Com-

mission, composed of India (chairman), Canada and Poland, to supervise adherence. This document was signed by the two powers whose hostilities it ended: France and North Vietnam.

The second document, a Final Declaration, expressed approval of the terms of the first document and fixed July 1956 for the general elections. This document was signed by no one, but was verbally supported by all the conference participants except South Vietnam and the U.S. The U.S. said that while it was not "prepared to join" in the declaration, it would "refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb" the agreements reached and warned that it would view with grave concern "any renewal of aggression in violation" of them.

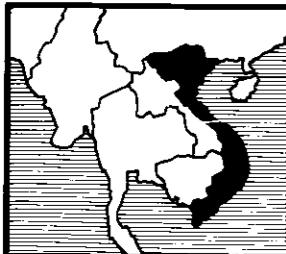
The agreements also established Laos and Cambodia as independent states, completing the exclusion of France from Indochina.

which needed U.S. backing for survival. The centrifugal force of nationalism, they believe, plus the traditional hostility of all Indochinese peoples toward the Chinese, would make of Ho Chi Minh (or his successor) another Tito, intent on charting an independent course. It is pointed out that even North Korea, whose survival as a Communist state was unquestionably due to China's intervention in the Korean war, is now showing strong signs of independence from Peking. Jean Lacouture, French journalist and author of *Vietnam: Between Two Truces*, put the matter graphically: "Should the U.S. . . . continue to prefer dead Vietnamese to Red Vietnamese, China will have won an historic victory."

All this criticism adds up to the proposition that if we are fighting the right war, we are fighting it in the wrong place; it is, comments Lippmann, as if we were trying to stop Russia by fighting in the Balkans. He insists that China can be contained only if its Asian neighbors—Pakistan, India, Japan and the Soviet Union—are "aligned together or are at least acting on parallel lines." In a recent statement Chester Bowles, our ambassador to India, coupled a strong endorsement of the war with a plea for a similar Asian alliance against the Communists. Other observers stress India's role as a potential counterweight to Peking; they argue that we ought to concentrate our energies on strengthening New Delhi instead of wasting them—and American blood—on a war that, in the end, will decide nothing of genuine strategic value.

Some believe we are exaggerating the peril from China. Early in 1966 several university professors, specialists on Asia, expressed to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee their beliefs that (1) Peking talks more belligerently than it acts; (2) traditionally, China is not expansionist, and its recent military incursions into Tibet and India were prompted not so much by expansionism as by its own interpretation (justified or not) of certain historical facts concerning the position of its borders; and (3) it is reasonable to assume that Peking's current verbal belligerency represents a passing stage, like Stalinism in Russia.

Supporters of the Administration's policy are quick with their rebuttals. Yugoslavia, it is pointed out, had no common frontier with Russia, a vital geographical factor which facilitated Tito's defection. Vietnam and Communist China do have common boundaries. The U.S., moreover, supported Tito's efforts to create an independent Communist state with economic and military aid. Would Communist China look kindly upon a Titoist Vietnam? Nor should it be forgotten that Tito was better able to resist Soviet pressure because of the determination of the U.S. to resist Soviet expansion in Europe. A weakening of U.S. determination to preserve South Vietnam's independence would serve to encourage the aggressive ambitions of Communist China, which has publicly stated its readiness to support revolutions throughout the underdeveloped countries of the world.



## What Kind of War?

The Vietnamese struggle, now in its 20th year, may be divided into two wars separated by a short-lived truce. The first war began in 1946; the adversaries were Ho Chi Minh, Moscow-trained leader of the Vietnamese Communists and nationalists (Vietminh), and the French, who sought to reestablish the hold on all of Vietnam that the Vichy regime had lost to Japan during World War II. Until 1949 our interest in the struggle, to the degree that it existed, seems to have been ambivalent: we had reason to sympathize with Ho as a nationalist, but not as a Com-

munist; and we had reason to sympathize with France as anti-Communist, but not as a colonial power.

In December 1949 the Chinese Communists established a common frontier with Ho's newly created "democratic republic." "With China in Communist hands," writes Rupert Emerson of Harvard University, "a total reassessment of the situation was in order . . . particularly for the U.S." The French could now argue, points out Emerson, that Vietnam was no mere colonial campaign, but one of the fronts on which the

world was holding back the onslaughts of communism.

Another such front, Korea, emerged the following year, and the U.S., with UN endorsement, fought on that front for three years. In Vietnam, France had to rely on its own manpower, but increasingly it came to rely on our supplies and financing. Well before Dien Bien Phu fell, we were largely underwriting France's war effort.

There is little dispute over the facts so far; the cold war had turned hot in Asia, and we fought it with blood and money in Korea and with money in Vietnam. Current controversies start with the Geneva agreements, which ended the Franco-Vietminh war, and their aftermath. Who first broke the truce which the agreements established? Was it the Communists at the direct instigation of Hanoi? Was it Ngo Dinh Diem, who with American support became premier (and later the first president) of South Vietnam? Or was it a group of (largely non-Communist) South Vietnamese nationalists who failed to find in the U.S.-supported, increasingly dictatorial Diem the symbol of the freedom and independence for which they had fought the French for eight years?

In other words, is the second Vietnam war to be considered a civil war in which we have intervened or a case of armed aggression into which we have been drawn as a defender of the victim?

### SOUTH VIETNAM: VICTIM OF AGGRESSION?

Beginning with the Eisenhower Administration, the official American position has been unequivocal: this is a war of aggression by Hanoi, aided and abetted by Peking. During the population exchange between North and South carried out under the Geneva agreements, Hanoi secreted some thousands of its guerrillas in South Vietnamese hamlets. Then the Communists waited, convinced that Diem would never be able to weld South Vietnam into a unified, viable state and that the area must inevitably fall to them. But according to the Administration, when, after two years, Diem's state seemed to be making steady progress toward social and political stability and it appeared that, if the Communists wanted to take over South Vietnam, they would have to fight for it, they ordered their guerrillas into action. In 1956 the Communists began a campaign of terror and assassination in South Vietnam which, over the years, developed into full-scale war.

If there was any doubt about Hanoi's involvement in this struggle, say the supporters of our policy, it was removed by the proceedings of the September 1960 congress of the Lao Dong (Communist) party in North Vietnam. One of the

"momentous tasks" of the party, the delegates were told, is to "liberate the South from the atrocious rule of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen. . . . The North is becoming . . . transformed into a firm base for the struggle for national reunification." Terror in the South and infiltrations from the North were intensified, and on June 2, 1962, the International Control Commission issued a special report declaring there was "sufficient evidence to show beyond reasonable doubt" that North Vietnam was guilty of aggression in violation of the agreements.

South Vietnam's admitted rejection of the provision in the Final Declaration at Geneva calling for popular elections throughout Vietnam is defended in two ways. First, it is pointed out that South Vietnam never agreed to the Final Declaration, and was therefore never bound by it. Second, it is argued that the North Vietnamese, crushed under the heel of a ruthless Communist dictatorship, could have had no freedom of choice at the polling booth. Under such conditions, the cards would have been stacked against Saigon.

Our own role in the war—the Administration contends—has been simply to meet force with force in accordance with obligations accepted by us in our bilateral agreements with South Vietnam, in the SEATO treaty and in the UN Charter. At no point have we initiated escalation; we have merely responded to Communist escalation. We seek no territorial gain, no military bases, the overthrow of no government; as President Johnson has put it, we just want the Communists to stop shooting and to negotiate a settlement that will allow South Vietnam to live in peace.

Our desire for peace has been manifested many times. Twice we suspended air raids over North Vietnam, once for 5 days and another time for 37 days. We have sent emissaries throughout the world in search of mediators. President Johnson has repeatedly offered to negotiate with Hanoi "without prior conditions"; and we have offered, once peace comes, to finance huge improvement projects of benefit to all of Southeast Asia, including Hanoi. All these initiatives have been rejected by the Communists.

### CIVIL WAR IN THE SOUTH?

Critics of the Administration interpret events quite differently. They point out that between 1954 and 1956, at least, the reports of the International Control Commission indicate satisfaction with the manner in which Hanoi was fulfilling its obligations under the agreements. Dur-

ing this same period, critics charge, Diem was violating their provisions by the ruthless suppression of all political opposition in South Vietnam, by boycotting exports to North Vietnam (especially rice, for which the Hanoi region had always depended upon the South), and by his refusal, with the support of the U.S., to participate in the elections.

It was primarily the election issue, critics of our policy insist, that precipitated the renewal of warfare in South Vietnam after 1956. The insurgents were not Northern infiltrates, nor even predominantly South Vietnamese Communists, but chiefly members of religious sects and old Vietminh fighters who, under Diem's campaign of persecution, had no alternative but to fight or be annihilated. That infiltration finally occurred is not denied; what is denied is that the infiltration can be interpreted as aggression. It is emphasized, again, that the Geneva agreements established not two states, but only a border along the 17th parallel dividing Vietnam into two temporary zones pending the reunification which was expected to result from the elections. North and South constituted one country, it is argued, and Vietnamese were fighting Vietnamese in a civil war.

Administration critics disagree as to when Hanoi entered the struggle in active fashion. Bernard Fall believes he sees a pattern dating back to 1957. Lacouture believes Hanoi's serious involvement began in 1959 or 1960. In any case, there is general agreement that it was subsequent to 1956, the year of the unrealized elections. Lacouture tends to minimize the Lao Dong party congress of 1960 as evidence of Hanoi's primary role in the war. He sees the congress, rather, as a response to pleas for help issued earlier in the year at a meeting of leaders of the anti-Diem forces in South Vietnam.

Even if Hanoi has by now taken over the direction of the Vietcong and the National Liberation Front, the critics of our policy insist, it is still the South Vietnamese who make up the great majority of the Vietcong's fighting men. According to Fall, even what he terms "inflated" American statistics show that at the beginning of 1966 the North Vietnamese constituted no more than 10 percent of the Vietcong; and, by midsummer of that year, the Vietcong was still recruiting men inside South Vietnam at the rate of 3,000 to 4,000 a month.

As to our own involvement, the critics of our policies say that we were determined from the

beginning never to let Communists, North or South, take over Saigon—whether by force, diplomacy or elections. They point again to the Dulles statement, made three days after the Geneva agreements, that we must seek every opportunity to thwart further Communist expansion. They recall President Eisenhower's offer to help Diem establish a "viable state" in an area which, according to the agreements, was specifically delineated as a temporary "zone." All of this may have been dictated by strategic considerations that seemed sound to Washington, they say; but certainly such a policy was in direct contradiction to another policy that Washington was simultaneously enunciating: that all we wanted was freedom for the South Vietnamese people to determine their own future.

But those who support the Administration insist that all the critics from the dove side, in elaborating their arguments, consistently overlook the one basic and overwhelmingly significant fact at the heart of the problem, i.e., that in its time the Vietminh and, today, the Vietcong and the National Liberation Front must be considered as no more than nationalist "masks" for the Communist party of North Vietnam. "As an organization . . ." writes George A. Carver, Jr., a member of the Central Intelligence Agency and a former officer in the U.S. aid mission in Saigon, "the National Liberation Front is a contrived political mechanism with no indigenous roots, subject to the ultimate control of the Lao Dong party in Hanoi. The relationship of the Vietcong and the DRV [Democratic Republic of Vietnam, or North Vietnam] is not that of politically like-minded allies. Instead, it is essentially the relationship between a field command and its parent headquarters."

The thrust of Mr. Carver's argument, of course, is to show that the Vietnamese war is indeed a war of aggression, planned and directed by Communist forces outside South Vietnam, and not at all the civil war that many observers allege it to be. It will be noted how often the civil war versus aggression question arises in the course of the national debate; in some ways it could be said to be the core of the controversy. But to Howard K. Smith, veteran World War II correspondent and now a TV newscaster and commentator for the American Broadcasting Company, the question is irrelevant. In a July 1966 broadcast, he told his audience:

"Some people say this is a civil war and we have no right to be in it. Well, I'm inclined to think it's not a civil war, but I don't want to argue that. I simply think the point is irrelevant.

There is nothing sacred about civil war. . . . The American Revolution was a civil war between Englishmen. It was decided by the intervention of a foreign power, the French, and today even the British admit that the result was good."

To Mr. Smith, the relevant point is that in a nuclear age the attempt to change borders by violent means is impermissible; it is too dangerous for the whole world. "We're in a hurry to establish that principle. . . ." he said, "before China is a nuclear power. . . . That is why we are resisting in Vietnam."

#### THE NONSHOOTING WAR

Earlier in these pages it was noted that the war is as much a struggle for the loyalty and support of those on whose land we are fighting as it is for the destruction of the enemy. The complexities of the nonshooting war, as the struggle for the loyalty and cooperation of all segments of South Vietnam's population may be called, were highlighted by the national elections which were held on September 11, 1966.

The polling was for a constituent assembly whose task is to write a constitution that will, hopefully, henceforth guarantee democratic, representative government to South Vietnam. Under the circumstances, the hopes seem unrealistic. Nearly all of South Vietnam is a battlefield. The peasant, by tradition village-oriented, knows little and cares less about national affairs. In the midst of war's chaos, a polling booth seemed to challenge common sense.

Yet not to have held the election, in the opinion of many, would have been even less realistic. In the spring of 1966, the Buddhist militants, who had already toppled three Saigon regimes in as many years, seemed about to get rid of Premier Nguyen Cao Ky. The turmoil subsided only when Ky coupled a pledge of elections with a show of force in several cities. Had Ky's regime fallen, political chaos might well have been piled upon the normal chaos of war. And from the U.S. point of view, the result might have been much worse than chaos. No one is certain what the Buddhists want beyond representation in a civilian government. Are they anti-Ky as well as anti-Communist? Or are they anti-American as well as anti-Ky? Or are they pro Communist—and ready to make peace with Hanoi? Denis Warner, an expert on Southeast Asia, writing for *The Reporter*, believes that all these tendencies are represented by the militants in one degree or another.

From all accounts, the militants constitute only a small minority of the 70 percent of South Viet-

#### Vietnam: A Chronology

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>1945</b> | Ho Chi Minh proclaims Democratic Republic of Vietnam; capital, Hanoi.  |
| <b>1946</b> | French-Indochina war begins as Vietminh attack throughout Indochina.   |
| <b>1948</b> | War continues; French install former emperor Bao Dai as chief of state of Vietnam; capital, Saigon.  |
| <b>1951</b> | War continues; U.S. agrees to give Saigon economic assistance via the French.  |
| <b>1954</b> | Dien Bien Phu falls and war ends with Geneva conference; Ngo Dinh Diem becomes premier under Bao Dai and Eisenhower promises direct help. Some 860,000 refugees, mostly Catholics, move to South Vietnam.  |
| <b>1955</b> | With French out, U.S. takes over training of South Vietnam's army; Bao Dai deposed and Ngo Dinh Diem elected president of republic of (South) Vietnam.   |
| <b>1956</b> | All-Vietnam elections, as provided for in Geneva agreements, fail to take place.   |
| <b>1957</b> | U.S. personnel injured by guerrillas.  |
| <b>1958</b> | Vietcong (successors to Vietminh) terror raids increase and we increase aid to Saigon.   |
| <b>1961</b> | Establishment of National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam praised by Radio Hanoi; General Maxwell Taylor makes first of several visits to Saigon as Vietcong raids spread; President Kennedy decides to  |
| <b>1962</b> | bolster South Vietnam's military strength and steps up number of U.S. military men to serve as advisers to South Vietnamese forces.  |
| <b>1963</b> | Rising South Vietnamese unrest climaxed in military coup against Diem, who is killed with his brother. (Regimes rise and fall in next few years as Catholics, Buddhists and military maneuver against one another.)  |
| <b>1964</b> | U.S. forces in South Vietnam increase to 25,000; U.S. Navy ships attacked in Gulf of Tonkin; Congress approves resolution giving President authority to resist aggression in Southeast Asia.   |
| <b>1965</b> | After Vietcong attack U.S. camp in Pleiku, President launches continuous bombing of North Vietnam (Feb.); U.S. ground troops, previously serving as "advisers," openly committed to combat (June); as peace move, Washington orders suspension of air strikes against North Vietnam for five days (May) and again for 37 days (beginning Christmas eve), but enemy does not respond; Air Vice Marshal Ky becomes premier (June). |
| <b>1966</b> | President orders bombing of oil depots in Hanoi-Haiphong area in attempt to stop growing infiltration of men and supplies into South Vietnam (June); our dead in Vietnam total over 5,000 and our combat strength is over 300,000 (September).   |

nam's population which professes Buddhism. But so fragmented is the country's political structure that this relatively small group may well represent the strongest political force outside the army. So far, Ky and the Americans have been helped by certain "moderate" Buddhist leaders who, whatever their feelings about Saigon and Washington, are unequivocal in their hostility toward Hanoi. As the September elections for a constituent assembly showed, moreover, neither the Vietcong nor the Buddhist militants proved politically successful in their efforts to keep the South Vietnamese electorate from the polls. Despite Vietcong terror and a boycott by militants, some 80 percent of those eligible to cast ballots did so. The result was hailed by the U.S. State Department as "progress toward representative, constitutional government in the face of Communist intimidation and terror...."

#### THE PROBLEM OF PACIFICATION

But to win the cooperation of the restive Buddhist leaders is only part of the nonshooting war. There is also the task of holding the loyalty of the people of the hamlets, who are suffering from both our bombs and Vietcong terrorism. To secure a conquered hamlet from further Vietcong attacks; to purge its inhabitants of pro-Vietcong elements, if there are any; to hold the

loyalty of the rest by good works: this is a vital part of the pacification program. Vietnamese, aided by Americans, carry out the first two functions; the good works are performed mostly under the direction of a small group of Americans who are bringing hospitals, schools, housing, agricultural equipment and training to the peasants. These Americans, the quiet heroes of the war, do not shoot—but they always run the risk of being shot.

At best, pacification is a slow process. At the beginning of 1966, it was planned to "pacify" not more than 900 of the country's 12,000 hamlets. And in the eyes of some observers, at least, it is a useless process. "We 'pacify' one hamlet," Malcolm Brown, who won a Pulitzer prize reporting the war from Vietnam, told a TV audience recently, "and then we burn down the next. What are the villagers to think?"

But Charles Mohr of *The New York Times* points out that even under governments which have done little for them, "large numbers of South Vietnamese have shown a persistent will to resist the Vietcong through years of inconclusive fighting." Now that they have a government actively concerned with their welfare, will not their will to resist the Communists increase? It is on this hope that the pacification program is founded.

the Chinese believe they are being surrounded.

Thus, the argument concludes, the nearer we come to victory in this war, the closer we move to an ultimate confrontation with Russia and/or China—and World War III.

Even if such a confrontation is not an immediate prospect, some experts consider that our policy has been most unwise. "... The application of American force against North Vietnam..." notes Alexander Dallin, one of our foremost experts on the Soviet Union, "leaves... [Hanoi and Moscow] no realistic or 'honorable' choice but to pursue a 'harder' line toward the U.S. .... It has also given new credibility to the Chinese contention about the illusory foolishness of 'peacefully coexisting'.... It has, finally, done more to promote a sense of anti-American solidarity among Communists... than any other recent event."

Administration spokesmen admit the existence of risk, but say it must be taken. When asked whether our policy is worth the risk of war (possibly nuclear) with China, Dean Rusk stressed that the alternative was to "get out of the way of those who are prepared to seize their neighbors by force... and let them succeed... and [admit] that there is no reasonable prospect of the kind of world that we tried to write in the UN Charter." On the whole, Administration supporters think the risk is minimal—and, in any case, better taken now than when China develops full nuclear capability. They emphasize that so far China has responded with maximum restraint to what it considers our "provocations"; even when we began to bomb the Hanoi-Hai-phong region in mid-1966, it made no warlike move, such as an increase of troops along its southern border.

As to Russia, the Dallin thesis is challenged as well as defended by many. Any retreat from Vietnam, opponents of his argument say, would encourage the militants in the Kremlin to believe that China was right in calling us a "paper tiger" that can be pushed around at will. History shows that the Russians respond only to firmness; indecision and appeasement simply enlarge their appetite.

#### ON ALLIES AND THIRD WORLD

There is a strong feeling in Congress, not always hidden, that most of our allies have failed us in Vietnam. The Administration points out that more than 30 nations have sent aid in one form or another, but only four countries (South Korea, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand) have felt sufficiently concerned to send troops—a total, as of early autumn 1966, of

over 50,000 men, about 45,000 of them South Koreans. Since the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand are SEATO allies committed to defend Southeast Asia against Communist aggression, the claim on them is presumably strong. Thailand, also a SEATO member, has furnished bases to prosecute the war. But neither Britain nor Pakistan has given anything of substance, while France's major contribution has been a steady stream of criticism of U.S. policy.

Among our allies in Western Europe and in Japan there has been a general lack of enthusiasm for the U.S. effort. Though Japan's government officially supports Washington on Vietnam, it does so in the face of considerable popular opposition to the war among the Japanese people. The mixed feelings of West Germans are shared by several of our European allies. If we are willing to stand firm in Vietnam, they feel, we will certainly stand firm in Europe. At the same time, however, they worry lest our involvement in far-off Vietnam will force us to reduce our commitment of men and money to NATO.

France, which lived through its Vietnam agony little more than a decade ago, is the only ally openly opposed to U.S. policy. There are those who say that de Gaulle does not want the U.S. to succeed where France itself failed. The impact on financially troubled Britain has been strong. Labor's left wing bitterly criticizes our policy and Labor Prime Minister Harold Wilson, who has supported us, has found himself at odds with a section of his own party on the issue. Moreover, we are asking Britain, as our closest ally, to maintain its military strength east of Suez. This further strains the British budget and makes it harder for Britain to honor its own commitments to NATO. Administration spokesmen argue that many countries like Britain would like to help more but cannot afford to.

Feelings in the third world, among the so-called underdeveloped countries, have generally ranged from indifferent to hostile, with little indication of support for the U.S. stand. In Latin America, only Brazil has indicated a willingness to send troops, while various Latin American officials have voiced resentment that the war is draining U.S. attention from an area of critical need in its own backyard.

In sum, the world impact may be broken down, from our point of view, into what Max Frankel, *New York Times* diplomatic correspondent, terms "short-term costs" and "long-term gains." The losses we risk by pursuing the war are the worsening of our relations with Russia, distraction of our attention from the vital arena of Europe,



## Impact on Friend and Foe

#### ON RUSSIA AND CHINA

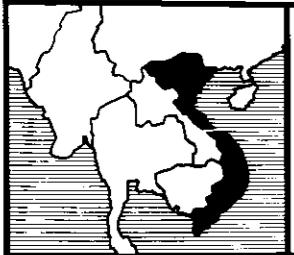
Those who fear we are heading for war with Peking or Moscow believe that the Communists see Vietnam precisely as we do: a critical "test case" which in no circumstances must be lost. "In Peking, no less than in Washington," says Morton H. Halperin, Harvard political scientist, "the desire to avoid another Munich is a major preoccupation of political leaders." Insofar as the domino theory has any validity, point out some observers, it works both ways: the two great leaders of the Communist world feel they have as decisive a stake in Vietnam as we do. Peking, moreover, has a special reason for concern: it sees an American victory there as another link in the ring of hostile Western bases with which

where East-West reconciliation proceeds without U.S. leadership, and a restiveness in the third world, which has not lost Washington's attention but has not gained any more of it either.

Against the risk of such losses, according to **The Times** correspondent, the possibility of these long-term gains must be weighed: an increased U.S. capacity to deal with "wars of liberation," a

growing world conviction that we are determined to use that capacity when necessary, and the fact that in Southeast Asia at least one "war of liberation" will be stopped at great cost to its perpetrators.

In the Administration's view, quite obviously, the long-term gains outweigh the short-term losses.



## The Search for a Solution

"Let those . . . who speak and write about Vietnam say clearly what other policy they would pursue," President Johnson has said. Many have taken up the challenge, and the alternatives offered range across the spectrum. At one end is a highly articulate and mobile minority of pacifists, youthful idealists and leftists—old and new—who demand the immediate, total and unconditional withdrawal of our troops. Some of these are openly pro-Vietcong, others are undoubtedly covertly so; but there appear to be a good many, especially among the youth, who profess to be neither principled pacifists nor Communist sympathizers, but who see our participation in this war as illegal and morally repugnant.

At the other end of the spectrum are those who demand the immediate mobilization of whatever military power is necessary to crush the enemy. This war must end, they say, with victory on the battlefield and not with an inconclusive negotiated settlement. And the most hard-line advocates of victory are willing to consider the use of nuclear weapons, if necessary, to achieve that goal. Indeed, they assert that the best chance we have of avoiding the escalation of this war into World War III is to unleash our nuclear potential. "A nuclear strike or two on a Vietcong concentration or in North Vietnam," asserts James Burnham, military analyst of **The National Review**, "would be the best guarantee that Chinese troops would not intervene." As for Russia, he insists that "it is absurd to think that the Kremlin would hazard Moscow for Southeast Asia."

But national polls indicate that the great majority of Americans favor neither withdrawal nor all-out war. There is, however, a wide range of

alternatives to our present policy, including suggestions for both escalating and de-escalating the war, to which they are inclined to listen with respect, even when they differ.

### THE ESCALATORS

Within this middle range, both escalators and de-escalators seem to agree with the Administration's stated policy on one cardinal point: we are fighting not to conquer North Vietnam or destroy the enemy, but to weaken his will to fight sufficiently to bring him to the conference table and reach a settlement which will permit South Vietnam to determine its future in peace. It is on how best to accomplish this that the two schools differ with each other and with the Administration.

The escalators believe that the President's buildup and application of our military strength has been slow, overcautious and to a degree self-defeating, causing unnecessary American losses and prolonging the struggle. We should have attacked the oil "tank farms" around the Hanoi-Haiphong areas much sooner than we did; we ought to consider the whole area—the two Vietnams, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand—as a strategic whole for combat purposes; we ought to throttle China's seaborne flow of supplies to North Vietnam by gunfire, port blockade or other available means; we must accelerate our attacks on the Ho Chi Minh trail, particularly that part which runs through "neutralist" Laos and Cambodia.

And, privately, some of the considerable number of escalators in our armed forces argue that, on the home front, the President's refusal to mobilize the reserves, to establish priorities and

controls for war production, and to delegate greater authority over the fighting to field commands has cost us both time and lives.

Many military men believe, according to military analyst Hanson W. Baldwin, that Ho Chi Minh is counting not on victory on the battlefield but on winning over American public opinion. "Some of them fear," writes Mr. Baldwin, "that the American public will not have the patience or the staying power to win the kind of war a policy of gradualism entails and that the war must be won as quickly as possible or it will be lost slowly. . . . Military power always yields the best results when it is applied in mass and as quickly as possible." And some escalators have their own version of the morality involved in fighting a restricted war. They ask: By what moral right does the President send hundreds of thousands of young Americans to risk their lives in an alien land, and at the same time deprive them of the most effective available weapons and methods to use against the enemy?

The Administration resists escalation on the ground that it could lead to a broadened conflict, perhaps a nuclear war. "We could make this into a larger war very quickly," Secretary Rusk said in July 1966, as pressures for stepping up our war effort seemed to be increasing. "All we would have to do is turn our backs for five minutes and let events take their course." He reminded his listeners that our objective in Vietnam is "to establish a peace, not destroy somebody else." The President has forcefully declared his opposition to "mindless escalation" that would needlessly destroy lives and property and increase the risk of World War III.

### THE DE-ESCALATORS

Some de-escalators believe that Moscow and/or Peking will directly enter the war rather than permit the Communists to be defeated in Vietnam. If this is so, then it is likely that the present struggle will end in one of three ways: our own withdrawal (and tacit admission of defeat); World War III; or a compromise settlement. If the first two alternatives are intolerable, then the third is inevitable. And if compromise is inevitable—why not now, before more blood is spilled?

Anyway, by the Administration's own statements, our purpose in fighting is not "victory" per se, but to get the enemy to quit shooting and talk. How, then, is this to be accomplished? Not, say the de-escalators, by bombing North Vietnam. On the Administration's own showing, they argue, the bombing has neither decreased the

flow of men and supplies southward nor has it perceptibly lessened North Vietnam's will to fight. If, as Administration spokesmen have repeatedly said in one way or another, we cannot allow the enemy to shoot their way to the conference table, neither can it be expected that they will allow us to bomb them to the table.

As for what we should do in South Vietnam, most de-escalators appear to approve some variant of the "holding strategy" advocated by Lieutenant General James M. Gavin, who served in the Korean war on the staff of General Matthew B. Ridgway. "To increase the bombing and to bomb Hanoi, or even Peking," the general told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee early in 1966, "will add to our problems rather than detract from them . . ." Instead, he suggested that we go over to the defensive, holding what we have in South Vietnam and meanwhile seeking a political solution "through the UN or a conference in Geneva." Foremost spokesmen for the de-escalating school, including Senators J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.) and Ernest Gruening (D-Alaska), as well as many experts outside government circles, such as Professor Morgenthau, Walter Lippmann and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., have endorsed this suggestion in principle. But it has also been sharply attacked by supporters of the Administration, and most particularly by some of General Gavin's military colleagues. General Maxwell Taylor, former ambassador to Saigon and now one of President Johnson's military consultants, told a Senate committee: "To button up our troops in defensive positions . . . would constitute the abandonment of our allies on the battlefield. . . . It would destroy all confidence in Vietnam in ultimate success and would encourage the timid and the wavering to turn to the Vietcong for protection . . ."

The de-escalators, while insisting that a lessening of our military pressure is a prerequisite to bringing the enemy to the negotiating table, admit that something more is needed. Some believe the additional element may be found in Hanoi's oft-repeated four-point program for peace, which calls for (1) recognition of Vietnam's independence and withdrawal of U.S. troops; (2) strict application of the military provisions of the Geneva agreements pending reunification of the country; (3) settlement of South Vietnam's "internal affairs in accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front"; and (4) reunification "without foreign interference."

The de-escalators point out that, on various occasions, Hanoi has intimated that the timing

of the American troop withdrawal might be subject to negotiation, and that, on this basis, Washington conditionally accepted three of the four points. The "sticker" is Point 3, which Hanoi has said means that the Vietcong must be admitted to the negotiating table as the "sole representative" of the South Vietnamese people. This, Secretary Rusk has said, is impossible to agree to; it would be "delivering South Vietnam into the control of the Communist North." The Administration has taken the position that the Vietcong can come to the conference table as part of the Communist delegation—but not with the right to negotiate on behalf of all South Vietnam.

In statements dealing with the Point 3 impasse, Senator Robert F. Kennedy (and others) has pointed out that since the Vietcong are doing much of the fighting, and since they have some support in the South Vietnam countryside, they will have to play some role in the postwar Saigon government. Obviously, then, we must talk to them at some stage of the negotiations. This appears to be elementary good sense to many de-escalators who say that when Washington persists in calling upon Hanoi to enter into negotiations, it is calling the wrong number. For, they argue, even if Hanoi agrees to a settlement, what guarantee is there that the South Vietnamese Communists will abide by it? Their terror tactics could keep South Vietnam in turmoil for years after a formal peace had been declared—and quite likely make it impossible for American troops to withdraw.

There is, of course, no guarantee that the Vietcong would accept anything less than full recognition as the sole representative of South Vietnam's 16 million people. But, say the de-escalators, we ought to test them; so far, we have offered them no more than a handful of chairs in the Hanoi delegation. And if we are sincerely desirous of peace, we will make the test not while we are escalating the war, but while we are in the process of de-escalating it.

Many variations of this peace approach have been suggested. The UN secretary-general, U Thant, has called for cessation of bombing in the North, a scaling down of the fighting in the South and discussions by all the combatants, including the Vietcong. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., arguing that the war in Vietnam can never be won "as a war of white men against Asians," urges that we ought to encourage the rise, in Saigon, of a truly representative civilian regime—even one that would want to talk to the Vietcong and perhaps release us from our commitment to stay in Vietnam.

#### ASIAN SOLUTION?

Mr. Schlesinger's general approach is in line with a growing feeling among Asian nations—especially those living uncomfortably close to the firing line—that this is an Asian war that should be settled by Asians. To this end, India, Cambodia and Thailand, among others, have called for various types of peace conferences. The Thai proposal was unofficially supported by a number of countries, including South Korea, the Philippines, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. It has further achieved the distinction of winning support from American escalators, de-escalators and Administration supporters alike.

Across-the-board American support for an Asian peace conference developed when Richard M. Nixon, who has urged more vigorous prosecution of the war, announced that he preferred the Thai plan to a reconvening of the Geneva conference, at which Asian states were in a minority. Earlier, President Johnson had given his quiet endorsement; to have done more, he explained subsequently, might have lessened its attraction to other Asian nations. But with Mr. Nixon apparently ready to spearhead a Republican drive in its support, the President, within 24 hours, endorsed it formally at a press conference—at the same time reiterating this country's readiness to attend any reconvening of the Geneva conference.

#### THE ADMINISTRATION POSITION

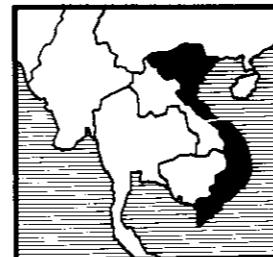
Supporters of the Administration have mustered a wide range of rebuttals to the arguments of the de-escalators. They argue, again, that the risk of Chinese intervention remains minimal as long as we don't threaten the Chinese mainland or invade North Vietnam. While it is admitted that infiltration has increased since we started bombing North Vietnam (Secretary of Defense McNamara gave this as a principal reason for the launching of our bombing raids in the Hanoi-Haiphong area), it is asserted that our air action has inhibited the acceleration. From our military intelligence reports, moreover, it is reported that our air power has had a deleterious effect on the morale of enemy troops, who are today being captured or are deserting in larger numbers than ever before.

As for "recognizing" the Vietcong, supporters of our policy insist that the Vietcong and its political arm, the National Liberation Front, are vassals of Hanoi; and that since Hanoi is the principal instigator of the war, it has the power to end it. Moreover, aside from our own convictions on the matter, there are the feelings of others to

be considered. Millions of South Vietnamese have been suffering at the hands of Communist guerrillas and terrorists; surely they are entitled to be heard. We have had enough trouble trying to persuade Premier Ky to tone down his demands for a massive land invasion of North Vietnam; how are we going to persuade him to sit down and talk peace with the Vietcong? Would we be justified even to ask him to do so?

Finally, say Administration supporters, the fact is that we have been wanting to de-escalate the war for a long time and have been met with rebuffs by Hanoi and its allies. And they point out that on Aug. 22, 1966, at the very time Secretary Rusk was informing the UN secretary-general

of our desire to de-escalate, United Press International was reporting from Tokyo that North Vietnam had officially denounced all American efforts to end the war and rejected the proposal by its Asian neighbors to hold a peace conference. And when in September President Johnson offered to withdraw U.S. troops from South Vietnam, provided North Vietnam withdrew its forces, Hanoi denounced the offer as a hoax. As this article went to press, the world was awaiting Hanoi's reaction to new U.S. proposals for bringing peace to Vietnam. These proposals, presented to the UN General Assembly by U.S. Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg, called for a step-by-step de-escalation of the war by both sides.



## To What End?

#### THE RIGHT OF DISSENT

Currently, the end of the war is nowhere in sight—nor, on the home front, are the protests against it. And there are some who insist that the two facts are directly related. The debates in Congress, the teach-ins on the campuses, the street demonstrations and picketing—do they not encourage the Communists to fight on?

Certainly both Peking and Hanoi have lost no opportunity to exploit American dissent. "On March 25 and 26 . . ." notes an editorial in the *Peking People's Daily* in the spring of 1966, "wide sections of the American people went into the streets and . . . made clear . . . [that] they oppose this dirty colonial war. . . . The Chinese people . . . firmly believe . . . the American people will frustrate the Johnson Administration's adventurous scheme for further aggression against Vietnam . . ."

National polls in this country tell us, of course, that the American people do not regard the war in this light and will do no such thing; that, indeed, if they do anything, it will be to encourage the President to more determined efforts. But the Communists know only what they read, and it is reasonable to assume that what they read boosts their morale.

In this country the protests against the protesters have been widely voiced. In some instances, official action has been taken against

the dissenters. Fifteen University of Michigan students who demonstrated against the war in a draft bureau were reclassified by their local board; a half-dozen Americans who had visited Hanoi in violation of passport regulations were deprived of their passports; the FBI is investigating the Students for a Democratic Society; the Georgia legislature refused to seat the legally elected Julian Bond because of his antiwar stand; a Williamstown, Mass., high school history teacher was told that he would be denied tenure because he criticized our Vietnam policy. And in August 1966 the House Committee on Un-American Activities held hearings in Washington to probe into Communist influence among dissenters and to show that legislative curbs were needed against actions helpful to the enemy.

But so far the Administration has stood firm against any appearance of a witch hunt. The Department of Justice told the Un-American Activities Committee the proposed legislation was unnecessary and undesirable. And while President Johnson has called his opponents "nervous Nellies," and referred to them during his meeting with Ky in Honolulu as "blind to experience and deaf to hope," he has also said that "the strength of America can never be sapped by discussion . . ." He and members of his Administration have repeatedly upheld the right of dissent.

But is this right "inalienable"—even when it

may give aid and comfort to the enemy during wartime? The question was brought into sharp focus during hearings held by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee early in 1966. Much testimony critical of Johnson's policy had been heard, and George F. Kennan, former U.S. ambassador to Moscow, was giving further testimony favoring de-escalation. The following exchange occurred with Senator Fulbright, chairman:

**Senator Fulbright:** "There has been some criticism of this committee for holding these hearings at all. It has been said that we are giving aid and comfort to our enemies."

**Mr. Kennan:** "[It] is my conviction that the implications of this [Vietnam] involvement . . . are of such magnitude that we should not wander into them without the widest, most serious, most responsible and most searching sort of a public debate. . . . It is not only useful, but it is essential, indispensable in fact to the workings of our democratic system, that there be this sort of a discussion, and that the people listen in and draw their own conclusions."

Senator Fulbright, whose statements from the chair had been even more critical of Administration policy than Mr. Kennan's, could not have been other than pleased with this reply. It is interesting to note that nearly a half-year later the senator, while reasserting his opposition to our war policy, felt moved to warn Hanoi and Peking that they would be "grievously deceiving themselves" if they refused to negotiate an end to the war in the belief that President Johnson's policy lacked popular support and would therefore have to be abandoned.

#### THE PROSPECTS

Bernard Fall believes that our strength in Vietnam is such that the war has become "militarily unlosable" for the U.S. But no responsible Administration spokesman has dared fix a date for its end. Top military strategists in Saigon are reportedly thinking in terms of a buildup of American forces in Vietnam to about 600,000 in the next 18 months. A goodly number of these would be committed to pacification projects designed to provide security and improve living conditions in the countryside and thereby win popular backing for the Saigon government. Some observers even believe that the war will end without any negotiated settlement: that the Vietcong insurgency will be smothered by U.S. power and gradually fade away.

In any event, there is general agreement that the war is likely to continue for at least some

years. Such a view attributes a considerable amount of fortitude to the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese and a good deal of patience to the American people. Are we likely to hold out that long? Or is it more likely that public pressure will build up either for drastic escalation or de-escalation in order to bring about a quicker end?

Public opinion polls are a tricky business and often reveal what seem to be conflicting points of view in opinion trends. In one poll, a majority favoring escalation in the form of an increase in our troop commitment to a half-million men is also ready to accept a Vietcong victory in a free election in Vietnam. Where, in one poll, a majority favors the blockade of North Vietnamese ports, in another the majority turns against it when the word "mines" is used instead of "blockade" and when the phrase "even though we might sink Russian or Allied ships" is added.

Certainly some of these "anomalies" arise from the difference in phrasing used by the pollsters; but also they may be a reflection of the American people's search for a way "out." Is the way out through escalation or de-escalation? "The evidence available," concludes one pollster, "suggests that the President would fare better at home, at least in the short run, if he responded with what appeared to be increased militancy, rather than with increased willingness to compromise."

As against this public pressure for escalation, —a pressure largely generated, some observers hold, by emotional responses to "labels" such as "communism," "aggression" and "commitment"—the Administration must continue to weigh the profound issues involved in more concrete terms. How high a price are we willing to pay to stop the Communists in Vietnam? How much risk dare we take of a war with Communist China? To what extent are we dissipating our defense strength in the rice paddies of the Mekong delta? Are we, indeed, fighting the right war in the right place at the right time? Or are we, in Walter Lippmann's words, fighting "an impossible war in an impossible environment . . . committed to an unattainable objective"?

It is easy to respond by saying, "The future will tell." We, each of us, help to shape the future. Whatever one may think of Mr. Kennan's advocacy of de-escalation, it is difficult to deny that he was holding up the torch for the democratic system when he said that discussion of these great issues is "indispensable" and called upon the people to "listen in and draw their own conclusions."

#### FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the U.S. stakes in Vietnam? In your opinion, is U.S. military involvement in Vietnam morally justified? legally justified? strategically justified? Why or why not?
2. How do you regard the conflict in Vietnam: Is it a civil war between the people of Vietnam? a case of armed aggression by Communist North Vietnam against the South? or both? If the last, which element, in your opinion, is dominant?
3. News commentator Howard K. Smith has said that the basic issue in Vietnam is whether in a nuclear age it is permissible for any power to change borders by violent means? Do you agree or disagree?
4. Do you think the Communist insurgency in South Vietnam can be overcome by military means alone? How adequate, in your opinion, are our efforts at pacification?
5. What impact do you feel the war in Vietnam has had on the Communist world? Do you think the impact on U.S. foreign policy has been helpful or harmful?
6. Do you think our allies have been giving us adequate support in Vietnam? If not, why?
7. What accounts, in your opinion, for the lack of support for our role in Vietnam in many of the underdeveloped countries?
8. Do you feel that we should give foreign public opinion much weight in making our decisions on Vietnam policy?
9. What solution do you favor in Vietnam: withdrawal of U.S. troops? mobilization of all the military power required to crush the enemy, even if this involves making all-out war on North Vietnam? persevering in present efforts to reach a negotiated settlement that will permit South Vietnam to determine its future in peace? If the last, do you favor de-escalating our effort and resorting to some form of holding activity? escalating our military effort substantially? or continuing present policies?
10. Would you favor or oppose peace negotiations in which the Vietcong is represented as an official party?
11. Do you think the public debate over Administration policies in Vietnam has helped or harmed the national interest? Do you think continuing debate is useful?

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

- American Policy Vis-A-Vis Vietnam: In Light of Our Constitution, the United Nations Charter, the 1954 Geneva Accords, and the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty. Memorandum of Law Prepared by Lawyers Committee on American Policy Towards Vietnam, 38 Park Row, N. Y., N. Y. 10038. 1965. 48 pp. \$2.25. Arguments in support of the position that the U.S. involvement in the Vietnamese war is illegal.
- \*Fall, Bernard B., *Viet-Nam Witness: 1953-66*. New York, Praeger, 1966. 363 pp. \$6.95. A collection of magazine articles written since 1953.
- \*Goodwin, Richard N., *Triumph or Tragedy: Reflections on Vietnam*. New York, Random House, 1966. 142 pp. \$1.45. A provocative *New Yorker* article updated.
- \*Lacouture, Jean, *Vietnam: Between Two Truces*, trans. by Konrad Kellen and Joel Carmichael. New York, Random House, 1966. 295 pp. \$5.95. Political analyses by a French journalist who has made many visits to Vietnam since 1945.
- \*The Legality of U.S. Participation in the Defense of Viet-Nam. Department of State Publication 8062. Washington, D.C., USGPO, Mar. 1966. 16 pp. \$1.15. The legal adviser of the State Department answers the case brought forward by the Lawyers Committee on American Policy Towards Vietnam.
- \*Shaplen, Robert, *The Lost Revolution: The U. S. in Vietnam, 1946-1966*, rev. ed. New York, Harper & Row, 1966. 406 pp. \$1.95. An account by a veteran foreign correspondent.
- \*The Vietnam Hearings. New York, Vintage Books, 1966. 294 pp. \$1.95. The testimony of Secretary of State Dean Rusk, General James M. Gavin, former ambassador George F. Kennan and General Maxwell D. Taylor before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations beginning January 28, 1966.

\*Items marked with an asterisk may be ordered by sending a check or money order to the FPA's World Affairs Book Center, 345 East 46th Street, N. Y., N. Y. 10017. Suggested readings are generally available in most local libraries and some World Affairs Councils.

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