

THE PRICE OF WAR

The feeling in Japan, Taiwan, Australia, and other Asian countries is that South Vietnam will show no sincere disposition to end the Vietnamese War until the U.S. starts to withdraw some troops.

Prosperity in Saigon has reached such an all-time high, so many profiteers are making huge fortunes because of the U.S. presence, that there is now a vested interest in maintaining the war as long as possible.

A group of South Vietnamese businessmen, visiting Tokyo to speed up their orders for consumer goods--cars, TV sets, transistor radios, tape recorders, etc.--admitted to a PARADE reporter that the ARVN (Army of Republic of Vietnam) is pretty much a corrupt joke, that it will fold like an accordion once the Americans pull out. Sen. John Stennis of Mississippi, head of the Senate Armed Services Committee and one of Lyndon Johnson's original war-hawks, is also honest and realistic enough to acknowledge the same truth. The South Vietnamese Army simply lacks the will to fight, to kill other Vietnamese, prefers to let the Americans do the killing and the dying.

The Saigonese businessmen predict that the U.S. will begin to withdraw some troops in August unless President Thieu can manufacture emergency reasons for their indefinite retention such as another imminent enemy offensive. They also have the feeling that the U.S. military in Vietnam will try to retain American troops there as long as possible, always on the grounds that the enemy has just about had it

and that one more big push will do the trick.

Meanwhile, the price of the U.S. involvement continues to skyrocket with more than 40,000 Americans dead in action and acci-

dents, more than 200,000 wounded, more than \$110 billion already spent. Worse yet, the future costs to the nation in veterans benefits will approach another \$50 billion. Add to this the interest payments on federal debts directly attributable to the Vietnamese war, and the final cost will approach \$350 billion.

Professor James Clayton of the University of Utah, an authority on the economic costs of wars to the American people, has just finished a book, entitled The Economic Impact of the Cold War which Harcourt, Brace & World will publish next year.

"I estimated \$330 billion as the final total of the Vietnamese war, providing we deescalate in a hurry," Dr. Clayton declares. "But that figure is an absolute minimum. A more realistic figure would be \$400 billion."

"I know that figure boggles the mind. But it's true. People simply have no idea how much this nation spends on veterans' benefits and war interest payments."

"For example, World War II cost \$381 billion. Veterans' benefits from that war have already cost the nation \$75 billion and will in the end reach the staggering total of \$476 billion. In addition, the nation will have to pay \$200 billion in interest payments. Do you realize what that adds up to? One trillion and fifty-seven

billions dollars."

Mr. Rayon points out that many politicians are worried about the \$28 billion specifically allotted this year for the war in Vietnam. What they do not know, he adds, is that this year we will also spend \$2 billion on interest payments for World War I, World War II and the Korean War.

"War is not only hell," he explains, "but fantastically expensive."