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## Mr. Colby on Vietnam

**W**E PUBLISH today on the opposite page an appeal by former intelligence director William E. Colby. Mr. Colby believes the country should take a part in healing the wounds that the Vietnam war left not only in the United States—but in Vietnam as well. Let us not duplicate in peace the error we made throughout the war, he argues. That error involved being able to see only the American dimension of the war. Can this country, he asks, be as practical and magnanimous in relation to a victorious enemy as it was after World War II to enemies it had defeated? The former CIA director argues that we should be: By mutual concern for each other's current interests, he suggests, a relationship of advantage to both can be built.

Mr. Colby is, we think, particularly well situated to comment. For he was a leading participant in the conduct and making of American policy in Vietnam during the war period—including some of this country's bloodiest and most controversial acts. He offers now, we believe, a valuable personal model of the broad, humane and forward-looking view, one free of demands for either vengeance or penance, which Americans ought to be taking toward current questions of Vietnam. Essentially the same view comes through the concern for human-rights violations in

Vietnam recently voiced by a group of former anti-war activists. This is also the view reflected in Jimmy Carter's pledge to "get the Vietnamese war over with" for the American victims of the war, including draft evaders and deserters.

Like Mr. Carter, Mr. Colby wants to proceed with the healing—and without rendering moral judgments on particular acts of the war or on the war overall. Mr. Colby's contribution is to take this standard the last mile. He would apply it to the Vietnamese victims of the war: those who were victims of American bombs and guns and those who stood with the United States during the fighting and who are under special duress in their homeland now.

The course Mr. Colby commends promises a bonus on a matter of special American concern, an accounting of the MIAs. His arguments reinforce the conviction of those who, like ourselves, have long felt that the best way to gain satisfaction on this count is to pursue direct and across-the-board negotiations with the governments of Indochina, especially Vietnam, in order to satisfy their legitimate interests as well as the United States' own. In brief, he makes a powerful and dignified case for where the country should now go. The case is only enhanced, we believe, by one's awareness of where Mr. Colby has been.

William E. Colby

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**Vietnam: A Warrior's Prescription for**

American MIAs, draft evaders and deserters dominate our policy discussions of how to close the book on our difficult Vietnam experience. Hundreds of returned POWs, thousands of relatives mourning the sacrifice of their loved ones, hundreds of thousands of Vietnam veterans all call for equal consideration as we attempt to put Vietnam in its proper historical perspective. But these are

*The writer, who served in Vietnam in the CIA from 1968 to 1971, retired as the agency's director last year.*

all Americans, and the Vietnamese also affected by the war are hardly part of our debates.

This American dimension to Vietnam long warped American policy. Our disdain for President Ngo Dinh Diem's Mandarin character led to his overthrow—and death. Our “smart bombs” destroyed trucks and trains but not bicycle porters. Our conception that modern war is fought by soldiers delayed for years our support for a “people's war” in South Vietnam.

Eventually, we turned to “Vietnamization.” Five hundred thousand weapons were distributed to South Vietnamese villagers to use against those they viewed as enemies. Five hundred thousand American troops were removed from Vietnam. But even then we left American guns and tactics, useless when American ammunition and American-scale logistics were cut off.

As we formulate our policy for the future, will we make the same mistake? Will we concentrate on the American dimension and view Vietnam only as it affects America? Or can we formulate a policy and program that will reflect the real interests of America—and of the Vietnamese people whose tenacity has carried their national integrity through more than 2,000 years of history?

Yes, let us bind up our nation's wounds over Vietnam. Let us put behind us the division between those who believed they bore the “torch of freedom” in Vietnam and those who believed they lifted it in the anti-war protests. Let us honor those who answered the call to duty, and let us welcome back to the national family those who followed their consciences into disobedience or exile.

But let us not believe the task will be ended when its American dimension is complete. The burdens borne by Americans were small compared to those of Vietnamese. Families are still shattered, wounds unhealed, lives disrupted—on a scale that would have crushed a less stout people. These

must receive equal attention when, as Lincoln said, we “care for him who shall have borne the battle, and his widow, and his orphan,” and seek “a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.”

The 130,000 refugees who fled Vietnam in April 1975 have been well received in America. Already, many are becoming productive members of the American community, as only the latest of the many waves of refugees, exiles and afflicted who contributed their talents to build this nation. But many did not escape in those last days. Some still put to sea in small boats hoping to be picked up by passing merchantmen or to circumvent Vietnamese and Cambodian patrols to reach sanctuary in Thailand or Malaysia. Some of these are coldly by-passed at sea, some reach the “sanctuary” to

rebuild and repaired its allies and enemies of World War II can heal the wounds of its allies and enemies in Indochina, to achieve an equivalent relationship of respect and friendship with them. Can we apply another phrase from our Declaration of Independence so admired by Ho Chi Minh, that we hold Vietnam, “as we hold all Mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends”?

The situation in Indochina is, of course, not the same as that after World War II. America faces a victorious rather than a defeated enemy. And the North Vietnamese David does not stand over a prostrate Goliath, but faces one with great remaining power and responsibility in the world. Neither can work his will over the other, and both can be prickly with pride in their future contacts.

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find that their presence is unwelcome either there or in farther refuges, some die from the rigors of the sea or hostile patrols.

Many remain in Vietnam, if not being “re-educated” in camps, still held without communication or possibility of joining their families who were lucky enough to escape in April 1975. Many others are in Laos and Cambodia, where they too once looked to U.S. support of their struggle, if not with the pervasive American presence that characterized Vietnam. Some idea of the possible numbers of those who identified their cause with America can be judged from the 900,000 who chose to leave North Vietnam in 1954, when a three-month period of grace to do so was a provision of the accords that recognized that North Vietnamese victory.

And many others in all three Indochinese nations were affected by U.S. power: the bombed bridges and depot centers of North Vietnam, the wounded and maimed throughout the peninsula, the widows and orphans of our erstwhile enemies and allies. Debate about whether these injuries were caused by America's “best and brightest,” North Vietnamese determination to dominate Indochina or anti-colonial revolutionary nationalism, can be left to the historians. The real challenge is whether the nation that

The way out, therefore, requires a turn away from the past, from recriminations over broken promises and antagonistic policies, toward a future of mutual respect and repair of the damages of the war.

The first step in such a process must be mutual recognition of the true future interests of each side, including the reality that neither should seek the humiliation of the other. Thus the new Vietnam properly asks recognition of its victory and identity in international circles such as the United Nations. And the United States can properly ask that its recognition be received simply as such, and not cast in terms of American penance. Intermediaries such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank are already acting to reduce the political frictions that direct dealings might bring, but nonetheless start the process of healing. And a group of American anti-war activists helped the process in their recent protest against violations of human rights by the victorious Vietnamese regime. They demonstrated that their opposition to earlier American policy was based on their view of principle, not blind support of the Vietnamese cause, then or in the future.

Each side in such a new relationship can ask actions by the other beyond mere recognition. Vietnam can

# Peace

ask assistance, direct or indirect, from the United States to rebuild. It can also ask assurance against efforts, overt or covert, against its new sovereignty, either by Americans or those benefitting from its protection.

On the other side, America has asked for an accounting of its MIAs. It also can ask for humanitarian treatment of its former allies and associates still within Vietnam, that silence from them does not mask retribution. In return for its assistance, it can ask that the family members of those who escaped in 1975 be permitted to leave and join their families. It could also request that those who served the United States during the war, or those closely associated with it in the South Vietnamese government, should also be allowed the 1954 option of exile from the new Vietnam. If the new masters of Vietnam truly wish to build a new society, they should release those who fought against it and will resist becoming a part of it.

As an aspect of the look ahead rather than backward, both sides could also agree to consign the misdeeds of the past to the mists of history, either air bombing or rockets, either grenades in marketplaces or "search and destroy." They could accept the impossibility of apportioning blame for the wrongs of more than a decade of war.

Within its own jurisdiction, each side can, of course, act on its own to repair the damage of the war. Vietnam's pride in its sacrifice and victory will become a chapter in the several millenia of Vietnamese history. "Re-education" as a genuine process and not a euphemism for imprisonment can lead many Vietnamese voluntarily to accept the new Vietnam, and with less cost than the brutal Cambodian tactic of class-elimination. America can give honor to those who responded to its call to duty to serve in Vietnam and to those whose consciences led them to protest or to refuse the call.

But America has an obligation not only to its own citizens and opponents with respect to Vietnam. To fulfill its commitments there, it must also rehabilitate those who fought beside us and looked, and still look, to a different future than the war's outcome has brought. Some may be rehabilitated elsewhere, but for many their only hope is to come to our shores, whether they are today in Thai refugee camps or looking out from the new Vietnam of which they will never be a part. When they, too, are part of the American community from which they had assurances of support in battle, then we can assert that we fulfilled our obligation to them in peace.