

Our Man Hoppe

Why Aren't They
More Unlike Us?

Arthur Hoppe

MR. NIXON'S bold decision to mine Haiphong, bomb Hanoi and blow the hell out of The China-Vietnam R.R. Co. while offering new peace terms, represents, the experts agree, "a well-calculated risk."

The risk, it can now be told, was well calculated by the U.S. Bureau of Calculations. The complex calculations that went into the risk taking were explained to newsmen yesterday by the Bureau's Chief Calculator, Homer T. Pettibone.

A transcript of the briefing follows:

Q—Can you tell us, Mr. Pettibone, exactly what risk is involved here?

A—Yes, World War III. You see, one of the mines we've planted in Haiphong harbor may blow up a Russian ship. We had to calculate whether the crazy, irresponsible, power-mad Kremlin leaders would blow up one of our ships in return—thereby risking World War III.

Q—And you calculated they wouldn't?

A—Yes, based on our experience during the Cuban Missile Crisis we calculated the odds were 14.2 to 11.8 that they weren't that crazy. Thus, it was safe for us to risk World War III on the grounds the Russians weren't irresponsible enough to risk World War III.

Q—It's good to know we can count on the Russians.

A—True. But at the same time we announced this bold, decisive step to end the war, we took the precaution of sending the Russians secret signals, reassuring them that we didn't really mean it and not to take it personal if one of their ships happened to bump into one of our mines.

Q—How are these secret signals transmitted?

A—Through Henry Kissinger's left ear. If he twitches it while denouncing the Rus-

sians on television, it signals them that he doesn't really mean a thing he's saying.

Q—What about the Chinese? Is there a risk involved in blowing up their railroad trains?

A—Very little. Now, as you know, the Chinese leaders are wily, inscrutable, power-mad revolutionaries with little regard for human life nor any fear of nuclear weapons. But what's a railroad train or two among friends? We calculated they won't risk World War III over a couple. So we were safe in doing so.

Q—Excuse me, Mr. Pettibone, didn't you also calculate the Chinese wouldn't enter the Korean War?

A—You know the Bureau's motto: "Win a few, lose a few."

Q—About stepping up the bombing of Hanoi while offering them new peace terms, what's the risk there?

A—That they'll think we're crazy. You know how stubborn they are. Dropping bombs on their heads may actually cause them to lose their tempers and thus not see our peaceful intentions. They may even pout and blindly reject our new peace offer out of sheer childish petulance. But we are counting on them to rise above such petty emotions and nobly accept our terms for the good of mankind.

Q—Are we also considering accepting their latest peace offer?

A—While they're killing our boys? Never!

Q—As I understand it then, Mr. Pettibone, we are now counting on the responsibility of the crazy Russians, the caution of the fearless Chinese and the maturity of the childish North Vietnamese to end this war and avoid a nuclear holocaust?

A—Well, we have to count on someone.