

Vietnam 11.24/65

Radio news reports of casualties for the "previous week" - which are not for either a week or the one previous, but for a seven-day period not a Sunday-through Saturday week* - focus on the duplicity, incompetence or stupidity - or a combination of these things - on the part of both military and diplomatic leaders.

With the rapidly-increasing battle tolls, much larger than admitted, according to news dispatches, some explanation has to be made. The explanation given is that thousands of North Vietnamese regular army troops are now fighting in South Viet Nam. American commanders and troops alike are generously quoted in unstinting praise of their new adversaries, as, indeed, how else could they be quoted, since they had just been clobbered by the foe?

Admitting that if he said any more or were he more pointed or if he gave the figures he could give he would be expelled from South Viet Nam and CBS would lose its accreditation, Morley Safer on the evening TV news November 23rd said the casualties in just two companies of American troops in the Ia Drang battle rendered ~~it~~ close to ineffective. How close, he declared, he dare not say. Of more than 400 men, how many must be casualties before the units lose their effectiveness?

The morning radio news (too late for the morning papers) announce the

most recent official figure, not for the previous seven days or the previous week, but a neatly arranged gerrymander allowing the best possible face to be put on it, of 240 dead. It would seem that the Is -Drang battel slâne would account for these.

But where did these new enemy troops from the north come from, how, why and when did they get there?

From the first, the US Commanders, from the top down, heralded a great victory, beginning with the complete destruction of opposing forces, In some mysterious way, the slaughtered enemy was resurrected from the dead, a condition in which it would seem they were they were induced by adding machines rather than bullets, an so delabored and bewildered their Americans who had so overwhelmingly defeated them that the American officers could not and did not call for idle reinforcements nearby, languidly awaiting a call!

After more than a week, news dispatches of November 23 quietly and without in any way re-evaluating the situation referred to the Is Drang battle as a draw- neither side won.

In the careful escalation planned and engineered by the US military, with the tacit agreement if not the active support and participation of the diplomatic, who should have/and ^{known} did know better, the total abandonment of all international law and desire for the respect of other peoples was dignified

and justified by calling it an interdiction to prevent the "infiltration" of North Viet Namese forces. The State Department issued a White Book allegedly documenting the intrusion of both arms and men from the north, the clear import and specific language of which was that these were the men and these the arms they used in the battles in the south. No major segment of the press bothered to read the White Book, which proved exactly the opposite. Of the cases cited in the White Book, perhaps two of the men might be considered North Vietnamese. Almost none of the weapons were of this origin, and the total of all the weapons, - all of which could have been bought on the open market from a dealer within easy walking distance of the Pentagon - was a minute fraction of the weapons in the hands of the opposing forces in the south. The only too well known fact, the historical certainty with any kind of a guerrilla war, is that the weapons used by these forces were, for the most part, taken by conquest or donation from their enemies. These weapons originated in the United States and were sent to Viet Nam to be used against those who fired them back at us and our "allies". The case of China should have been only too fresh in the minds of the U.S. military, for it was they who supplied the arms and, in fact, trained most of the men who won the revolution for Mao. The then-current news reports

were almost monotonous in their painful consistency: As fast as the United States trained and armed Chiang forces on Formosa and shipped them to the mainland, these fresh troops, from commanding generals to yard birds and sometimes in complete units as large as divisions, deserted to the Communist side, taking all their arms with them.

But either incapable of learning, overwhelmed by their own egos, or for more sinister purposes, the military and diplomatic leaders persuaded the President to wage war without declaring it, merely one of the shameful parallels with Hitler's methods. As justification they told him - and he told the world - this was to prevent the dispatch of men and materiel to the south from the north. A fantastic and really staggering tonnage of bombs was dropped in North Viet Nam. "Targets were allegedly approved by the President himself but actually often included, as officially they were supposed to, what were called "targets of convenience" - whatever struck the fancy of individual pilots. Inevitably, regardless of the basis for the selection of the target, there were great civilian losses and little military damages. The history they themselves had written of strategic bombing in World War II did not deter the military, for this history showed such bombing defeated its declared purposes and instead

unified the attacked and improved their morale, resulting in greater popular support for the government - and remember, this was for such governments as Hitlers!

Perhaps because they willed it, and who could stand against their will? the generals decided such bombing would end the mythical invasion from the north in Viet Nam, an invasion that existed merely in American propaganda. Perhaps the real purpose of the inhuman and except again for Hitler unprecedented onslaught on an innocent population was more sinister, for whether or not so intended, from the reports of the U.S. command in the field before the end of 1965, this mythical invasion became a very real one, and it resulted in a mortality rate among American troops as severe as had been the attrition rate among American aviation over North Viet Nam, where a primitive and backward government and its peasant population had wrought unbelievable destruction among the attacking planes. Even if the American figures for the losses were correct, and they were but a fraction of those claimed by the North Viet Namese (and no side ever tells the truth about its losses) they were shocking and staggering and very likely on a then-unequaled scale. The full import of a semi-savage^{people} by American stories, shooting down planes flying faster than the speed of sound

with primitive hand-arms, was never publicly acknowledged or in any way explained to the American people.

Apparently well-documented claims of repeated attacks on non-military targets, the most famous of which was a leprosarium claimed to have been clearly marked, were denied in the United States but widely reported and believed in the rest of the world. Bridges in such number they would scarcely be expected to exist in such a blighted and backward land were demolished by brave aviators, flying in opposition to no enemy aviation, which was virtually nonexistent anyway, only to be destroyed all over again, and again and again and again. Ferries were sunk by bombs, and ever all moving traffic on the roads were bombed and strafed, and publicly admitted -imagine that! and think of Guernica. All to prevent the flow of men and arms to the south.

What actually happened, according to the new version by the American military, is that all of this interdiction, all this slaughtered and destruction, all this barbarity and open contempt for our own self-respect and the decent feelings of the rest of the world, is that there was an influx of both men and arms that was both completely undetected and in great number.

Prior to the period of the Ia Drang battle and beginning with the Presidents late Spring speeches, there were vague but credited references to the

references to the presence, if not in battle, of either a North Viet Namese unit or elements of it. Secretary Rusk repeated its number over and over again, usually declaring its removal would be taken as a token by the United States which might then consider ceasing its attacks on the north. But at Ia Drang, varying number of North Viet Namese regiments, up to five being claimed by some U.S. commanders, were alleged to be involved in that battle alone.

What could have been expected as a consequence of the shameful attack on the by modern military standards defenseless north? What should have been anticipated of the monumental invasion of South Vietnam by a hundred thousand American troops bearing the most modern arms in the most staggering variety and quantity? Was it expected that Ho Chi Minh would commit hari kiri, or that he would melt into the rain forests, or abandon the successful struggle of his entire life? That the Chinese would throw away what so many hundreds of thousands of them had died for? Were they to suddenly die of fright, these peoples who had won their countries in wars they began with a handful of supporters and but a few of the most primitive weapons, fighting against the best French troops and the best American equipment? Or were they to turn into cowards?

What alternative did the openly declared American policy and its equally blatant fulfillment leave North Viet Nam or China?

The least that could be expected was as much assistance as could be given to the guerillas in the south, the natives who had already won their war over the United States puppets supplemented by about 300,000 American troops and uncounted airplanes, artillery and some of the most heinous inventions of mass destruction, such as napalm and phosphorus bombs that burned and tortured uncountable thousands of villagers.

But at least overtly the United States Government pretended that what it would do its opponent would not. The reason openly given in October and November of 1965 for earlier refusal to even talk with the opposition was that our side was whipped and would not talk from a position of weakness. Was the other side to wait until it was whipped and negotiate from its weakness? Can there ever be negotiation if each side waits only until it can dictate from a position of strength?

The unashamed position of the United States is that it had a legal and moral right to invade a country 7,000 miles away, destroy it and its population, manipulate the puppet government it had installed in violation of international agreement it had committed itself to honor, but that the people of

territory - legally, despite American allegations, it is not a country - had no right to ~~assist~~ resist us and their brothers. with whom by this same international agreement they were to have been re-united could not in any way assist them.

We, from 7,000 miles away were not invaders; the natives were!

And by the end of November, after the frightening escalation of destruction wrought by American power, less, not more of the south was in the hands of our stooges; more, not fewer of their troops and ours were casualties. Saigon could not be adequately supplied by electricity. A new and already aging electric generator less than ten miles away could not be used, and another, newer one under construction by the Americans ever closer to the city could be worked on only in daylight for our side did not control the countryside almost within hailing distance of the "capital":

Such is the bitter fruit of a policy that, if honestly declared, is
and stupidity
a monument to the ignorance of the men who formulated and declared it; and if
not honestly stated is high point in international duplicity and dishonesty
previously attain by only the fascist enemy of World War II.