

# An Admiral Speaks His Mind

By EDWARD C. OUTLAW

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va.—One too often remains silent on issues which gnaw the vitals of his being. Along with a multitude of others I have long deplored the continuing decline of our country's prestige. Now, the disgraceful trial and conviction of Lieutenant Calley removes any reticence to offer constructive criticism of our government.

In February, 1965, I was one of two task group commanders who launched the first sustained strikes on North Vietnamese targets and shortly thereafter became the commander of Task Force 77, commanding all of the U.S. Navy aircraft carriers in the Tonkin Gulf. It was during this latter period that a feeling of utter frustration permeated my staff and my entire command. Although we were successful in interdicting North Vietnamese rail lines and inflicting costly damage on the enemy, we were restrained from carrying out a campaign which seemed designed not to win.

In the spring of 1965 a photographic reconnaissance plane returned to the flagship with photos which were immediately identified as a surface-to-air missile site. This was the first clear proof that SAM sites were under construction. That same day the planning members of my staff and I flew to Saigon to confer with the Commander, 7th Air Force, and to plan a joint Air Force/Navy strike against this first site, which was not yet completed. The joint plan was proposed through the chain of command and, after what seemed an inordinate delay, the proposal was returned disapproved.

Such a refusal was beyond my comprehension. It was feasible to have destroyed this site and all others still under construction which were ultimately completed. It was not until the North Vietnamese had shot down some numbers of our aircraft that our combined air forces were permitted to strike back at these, now well-established, defensive sites. Since then approximately 115 of our planes have been destroyed by surface-to-air mis-

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## *It Is Time to End The War and Not To Punish Little Men*

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siles launched from pads which I believe could have been destroyed at a minimum risk before they became operational.

Since departing the Southeast Asia area in the summer of 1965, and continuing on past my retirement, I have witnessed the constant deterioration of morale within our great country. We have been disrupted internally by external sources and to some extent by well-meaning individuals and groups. Our youth have resorted to mild and stronger narcotics to show a defiance of what? They are not really sure.

As a nation, we failed by not declaring war in the traditional manner, by not relying on the inherent patriotism of our people to see this great country through to an early decision. Rather, we relied on a "resolution" which carries none of the force, the restraints or the sacrifices required by a declaration of war.

This mess is not the responsibility of this Administration. It is that of years of national fear aided and abetted by so-called intellectuals within and outside Government circles. No amount of rhetoric, expounded by self-styled pundits, can erase the simple fact that we have not won this conflict only because we, or our leaders, did not try to win.

Now we are going through a period of "gradual withdrawal." Perhaps this is necessary to buy more time in which to equip and further train the South Vietnamese armed forces. But, if that is not the whole story, and our Government truly believes that we must withdraw gradually to protect our men during withdrawal we are, again, not willing to use the power which is at our disposal.

The President of the United States could, with credibility, say to the North Vietnamese Government:

"We will immediately commence a complete withdrawal of all U.S. forces from South Vietnam and will complete this operation by the end of 1971—provided North Vietnam withdraws her forces to the north of the DMZ and does not interfere in any manner with such a withdrawal nor commit any act of aggression against South Vietnam until the withdrawal is finally completed and, provided, that all prisoners of war are immediately rehabilitated to their homeland. Should North Vietnam violate these provisions in any manner whatsoever, I will direct the air forces of the U.S. to destroy completely Hanoi, Haiphong, all other principal centers of industry and all dikes and dams in North Vietnam."

The peoples of all the world can understand such language and it is my belief that Hanoi would respond favorably.

It is time for this ugly little conflict to end. It is not time to criticize and punish little people who have fought for their country believing such fighting to be in our best national interest.

I join the multitude of former military men who say: "I have killed because I was ordered to and because I believed that by so doing I might have shortened the time our country and our men were exposed to danger. I have ordered bombing against targets which unavoidably must have contained civilians; I would do it again if my country so ordered."

To compare the ridiculous trial of a young lieutenant to the Nuremberg trials is as fallacious as any argument could be. To bring out what a frightened young lieutenant might have said to a group of psychiatrists is the most unjust thing I have ever seen printed.

Lieutenant Calley may not have been a hero, but he represents that sort of young man who has always been the salvation of our nation when the chips were down. He should be pardoned from this unjust sentence at once.

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