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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Mayaguez Affair

"Hail to the chief."

Congratulations to President Ford for his swift and forthright action, in the recovery of our ship and its crew from Cambodia.

He reassured the world that the U.S.A. still carry the "big stick" and the "giant" is not asleep.

Vance B. Gay.

Washington.

Haven't we learned anything?

Our unilateral action regarding the dangerous Mayaguez incident is contrary to our pledge to the United Nations Charter. The U.N. was set up as a peace keeping agency. Bypassing this mechanism in favor of flexing our military muscle is not conducive to world peace.

Might is not always right.

Janet N. Neuman.

Washington.

Hurrah! America, at last, has a decisive President in the White House.

In my humble estimation, Gerald Ford's presidential stock went up 1000% as a result of the military action which led to the successful rescue of the American merchant ship Mayaguez and its 40-man American crew.

Thank you Mr. President for not poking your head in the sand.

Joseph F. Reisgen.

McLean.

The Mayaguez incident brings into focus the Orwellian use of the words "isolationism" and "internationalism" by those who believe in American military intrusion abroad. An "isolationist" or "neoisolationist" would have sought to resolve the grievance through active, though patient, diplomacy or through adjudication by international organs, using military force only as a last and postponable resort. Our chief internationalist, however, bypasses serious and sustained diplomatic dialogue and moves in like an avenging fury in order to prove that our manhood needs no reliance upon foreigners. The semantic reversal of "isolationism" and "internationalism" in this day and age could not receive a more dramatic demonstration.

Louvan Nolting.

Washington.

As much as I enjoyed the play, "Pueblo," I know I'm going to enjoy the movie about the Mayaguez incident even more.

LuAnne Feik.

Reston.

It is a terrible thing to wake in the morning and find that the government of this country has once more attacked another nation, in violation of the United Nations charter, and committed an act of war without either public discussion or congressional approval. This act will only serve to make clear that the United States is the bully boy of the world. Three days does not exhaust diplomatic channels, particularly when there is no direct contact with the Cambodian government, and force had apparently been decided upon from the start. The only other consequence is the increased probability that Thailand will press for the removal of all U.S. troops.

The American people deserve a foreign policy that is arrived at in open discussion, conducted legitimately, and promotes an atmosphere of peace. The bullying, double-dealing tactics, which seem to be the sole substance of our present policy, serving only to create the illusion of power, are more appropriate for mobsters, than for a country supposedly dedicated to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Richard W. Lymn.

Gaithersburg.

I feel compelled to respond in some way to the avalanche of praise which the public and the Congress have put forth regarding President Ford's recent incursion into Cambodia.

I was tricked. I was tricked into thinking that the U.S. could stay out of Indochina. I was tricked into thinking that the public, the military and our leaders had learned some lessons regarding the overbearing exercise of Imperial whim. The lessons, clearly have not been learned. The United States continues to utilize force as the path of least resistance.

It is beyond comprehension that the forces of the "most powerful nation" in the history of the world are summoned to do battle with the people of Cambodia over the incident of a con-

fiscated ship. There was no evidence the crew had been harmed, that the ship would not be returned or that the incident could not be dealt with through the more humane, if less exciting, channels of international diplomacy.

The incident seems analogous to the western gunslinger riding into town and beating or killing the first unfortunate who doesn't bow to his authority. Is the image of the U.S. as bully to the world so ingrained in our national consciousness that the response to acts of war remain a chorus of praise for the "decisive action" of the President.

Perhaps the most troubling response comes from the Congress. The supposed liberal voices in our capital who have fought hard to end the U.S. adventure in Indochina have been quick to respond with vigorous approval to this latest outrage. Is it simply because we were able to win this one quickly without having to bother with a long drawn out war? The Congress seems pleased that troops can still be sent in to "do the job" and then exit quietly with the honor of their country intact.

The United States has perpetrated another act of aggression and terror on a people barely able to sustain an agricultural system much less a complex of global dominance. The U.S.

has flexed its muscles by killing Indochinese people with the hope that this will prove to the world that we are a "first rate power."

I tremble with rage when I consider the assumptions implicit in this show of force. It is simply wrong for the people of America to support, condone or even tolerate these acts of terror. If the result of power is indeed corruption, then the actions of the last several days have shown America to be corrupted absolutely.

Lin Neumann,

Center for the Study of Power and Peace.
 Washington.

America sounds like a nation of manic depressives. The big rich kid wrenches his sailboat from the little kid two blocks down the road. Jubilation. Euphoria. What was the big kid doing in the neighbor's yard in the first place?

At the time of the Tonkin Gulf incident, a few of us had a nagging suspicion the whole thing smacked of a set-up. It looks increasingly as though we were right. For some reason, me-thinks the same now. The Mayaguez incident, like the Tonkin Gulf bit, has the same delicate odor as my fish emulsion fertilizer. Cynical?

Eventually it will seep out, as these things do. The same people will have egg on their faces and another batch of Americans will become disenchanting and cynical or more so. Isn't it time

we grew up—before it's too late?

T. M. Dixon.

Fairfax.

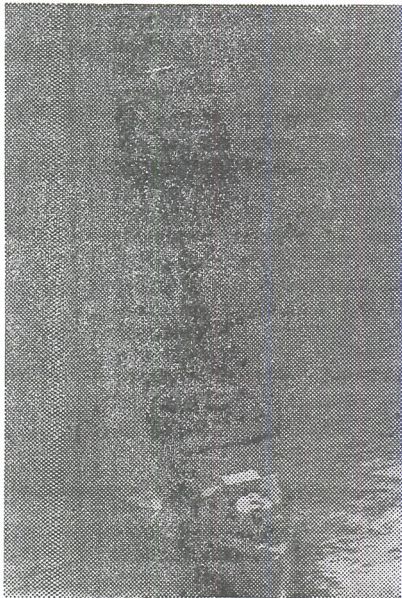
The attack of the United States on Cambodia must be condemned in the strongest terms. It was a thoughtless, stupid, adolescent assault, the latest in a 200-year history of adolescence. Once again, America's pride has sent her galloping to war, and has sent others to their death. What could possibly have justified it? What have we accomplished? We retrieved a ship and crew which would almost certainly have been returned regardless. We have compromised the integrity of an ally, Thailand. We have raised the suspicion that the Mayaguez really was a spy ship. We have shown the world once again that the nation we think of as great has the emotional maturity of a child of ten. Finally, we have proven (to the only country that needed proof, our own) that the armed might of the United States of America is greater than that of Cambodia.

The immaturity of Cambodia's seizure of the Mayaguez can be explained by the youth of a government not three weeks old. How can our action be explained? The best we can say is that Gerald Ford felt obliged to prove his political manhood.

Once again, I am ashamed of my President.

James M. Henle.

Cambridge, Mass.



A country as desperate for a military and political victory as we have been may lapse into a period of unwary euphoria over the successful conclusion of the Mayaguez affair. It would be a pity if Congress should suddenly relax its vigilance and return, even on a temporary basis, to the shortsighted pattern of rubber-stamping executive decisions in the foreign policy field. The Mayaguez affair is of limited significance and must be regarded as such. New and infinitely more sophisticated tests loom on the horizon and Congress must pursue its adversary role if a thorough airing of the problems involved is to be realized.

Take for example the apparently impending request from President Anwar el-Sadat for financial aid from the U.S. to settle Egypt's large debts to the Soviet Union. Here, as contrasted with the Mayaguez incident, there are substantial Soviet interests at stake. Will Dr. Kissinger attempt to rationalize our participation in the payment of these debts? If so, will Congress delve deeply into issues such as (a) the chance for Soviet/Egyptian collusion on this matter (b) even assuming no collusion, the projected benefit to the U.S. through bettering U.S./Egyptian relations as equated against the strengthening of the Soviets through debt collection and (c) whether the best way to let Soviet/Egyptian relations fragment would be through the perpetuation of a long term debtor-creditor relationship.

Also, one would hope that Congress will see fit to address itself to the issue of whether it is advisable for an appointed official such as the Secretary of State to concurrently wear the hat of national security advisor to the President and thus be able to filter out any dissenting views from his policy conceptions. Surely Congress will not permit the Mayaguez affair to serve as a basis for the conclusion that a well oiled executive is perfectly competent to unilaterally manage our foreign affairs. The administration can be expected to push such a theme.

John W. Dixon.

Fairfax.