

Kriegsspiel Out of Context

To the Editor:

Your Feb. 3 edition carried an article by C. L. Sulzberger, "Kriegsspiel in Vietnam," in which a work of mine is quoted entirely out of context. It has been made to seem that I would "excuse," and possibly advise, the nuclearization of the war in Vietnam. I am further pictured as being callous to the use of nuclear weapons against mainland China.

I should have expected better of Mr. Sulzberger. What he implies is absurd. The official abstract of the article, a technical work appearing in the current issue of "The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science," makes my intention crystal clear:

"Examining traditional concepts of warfare, the author finds that civilians have not normally been considered appropriate targets of violence and that civilian productivity and home-front morale are largely irrelevant in conditions of thermonuclear war. . . . There are thus important moral and practical reasons for adopting 'open cities' and sanctuary policies to spare civilians and reduce over-all deaths. Three cases are examined in detail: open cities and sanctuary policies . . . at the time of a hypothetical war with the U.S.S.R.; . . . the Warsaw Pact allies; and finally in the event of a future war, again hypothetical, with mainland China."

Nuclear war is not a pleasant subject to discuss under any circumstances. But the weapons exist by the thousands, and some of us do not think it inhumane to ask how, if war broke out, they might be used short of indiscriminate slaughter. On the Chinese scenario itself, I specifically concluded with the warning: "We are

not arguing for the invasion of North Vietnam or the early use in a U.S.-Chinese war of nuclear weapons by the United States."

There remains the question of my actual record and advice on Vietnam. I have been squarely against our Indo-chinese adventure, in print, since 1961. In Pentagon briefings and lectures at the War Colleges and Service Academies I have repeatedly warned against committing American lives and interests to a marginal and unworthy war. Never denying the price to be paid for our errors, I have uniformly advised that we cut our losses and get out.

My scenario was in fact written three years ago. Does Mr. Sulzberger think as he reads today's news from Cambodia and Laos that a last desperate venture, an invasion of North Vietnam, is wholly out of the question? Does he think it impossible, if America were to invade the North, that ultimately the Chinese might intervene too? If, as I postulated in my hypothetical, there had been a massive American defeat, would the American people really abhor the use of nuclear weapons against the Chinese "to save American lives?"

Mr. Sulzberger states: "I cannot personally imagine any scenario bringing nuclear weapons into Indochina." I do not think the United States is going to use nuclear weapons against anybody for a long time to come. But what Mr. Sulzberger says tells us a good deal more about the limitations of his imagination than about the plausible terrors of this world.

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Director

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