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On Dealing With Reds in Asia

THE DRAWBACK to dealing with communists collectively is that they are enslaved by a pathological obsession, to wit: their beliefs and acts are unalterably right, and all who dissent are unalterably wrong, and also liars and scoundrels.

It is the most persistent example of the closed mind within human view. When you transfer it to history, to international relations, you confront an insoluble puzzle.

It was President Nixon's puzzle in one more attempt to bring the Indochina war to a close, and escape with a few tatters of the American shirt.

Mr. Nixon knows — as most Americans now know — that the war was a blunder rooted in delusion, its conduct irreconcilable with the American ideal and the American commonsense view of the possible.

That is, it was and is futile, a flagrant waste of our time and our human and material resources.

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MOREOVER HE KNOWS, because he can see the evidence all about him, that the war was demoralizing to the American character, and retarding to its traditional course through history.

The President sought to overcome this setback of the 1960s. His critics have said his method was wrong, and too gradual in its application. That has often been discussed here and is not pertinent to this piece.

What is pertinent, is that the President has for eight months been secretly endeavoring to reach a settlement with the enemy in the Paris peace talks, by making concessions which substantially meet periodically announced enemy terms.

It has failed, with the prescribed communist sputter of vituperation, and charges of trickery.

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YOU CAN READ the details of the Nixon offer in the news. In the main it provided that the United States would withdraw all troops from South Vietnam by August 1, 1972, involving a prearranged cease-fire. In addition, it would back a new election in South Vietnam, enemy elements participating. The only condition was that the enemy would release American prisoners of war.

Short of detailed examination, this offer would meet the North Vietnam and Viet Cong position that they would not negotiate with the Thieu regime in Saigon.

The only visible objection of the enemy would be that the election might misfire. The POW factor is only a matter of childish Asiatic pride, while it happens to be important to Americans.

Possibly that American satisfaction is the key to it, but the enemy rejected the whole package. They then raised the ante by insisting the Americans should also aid in overthrowing the Thieu regime, which would probably open a new and equally senseless war. We could not justify such an act, to ourselves or before the world.

That of course is the primary goal — chaos. It is the historical communist's chief weapon, which we should identify after a couple of decades with communists on the Asian mainland.

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