

Letters to the Editor

Comment on Pentagon Study

To the Editor:

Not since the Presidency of John Adams has any administration so instinctively distrusted the exercise of freedom of speech and of press by the American people as the present one.

That is why it rides roughshod over constitutional limitations on wiretapping. That is why it recommends the use of police force against even peaceful demonstrations. That is why it seeks to intimidate the networks when they tell the truth about the war or the Pentagon. That is why it now seeks to muzzle the press.

Its reaction to criticism is, like that of John Adams, not argument or explanation but censorship and coercion, and its reaction to the Bill of Rights, that it is a tiresome anachronism that should be swept aside.

Thus the hysterical argument of irreparable damage to national defense, when the only irreparable damage is to the reputation of this and past administrations. Thus Secretary Rogers' astonishing statement that publication of the papers by The Times "is going to cause a great deal of trouble."

This is precisely the objection that the Government of George III had to the disclosures of the Hutchinson letters by Benjamin Franklin.

The Bill of Rights was not written into the Constitution in order to protect governments from "trouble," but so that the people might have a legitimate method of causing trouble to governments they no longer trusted.

HENRY STEELE COMMAGER
Amherst, Mass., June 17, 1971

To the Editor:

Instead of digging into the history of the 1964-1965 period under the Johnson Administration, I suggest that The Times undertake to discover and present the decisions that already have been made by the Nixon Administration to be implemented in the spring of 1973.

I suspect that The Times is not interested, concerned, or courageous enough to answer that question. You will deserve it, consequently, when

Federal troops shut down your newspaper one of these days.

DONALD PANETH
New York, June 14, 1971

To the Editor:

The Pentagon Study of the Vietnam War (June 13) is a disclosure of Machiavellian duplicity. We have sent our young people to die in battle, we have devastated vast areas and we have slaughtered countless civilians on the pretense that we were defending allies from aggression. The record now seems clear that we betrayed our ideals as we arrogantly applied our power to further our political goals.

U. S. Secretary of State Frank Kellogg gave his name to the 1928 pact outlawing war as an instrument of national policy. The U.N. Charter required all governments to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. At the Geneva Conference in 1954 the U.S. emphatically reaffirmed that peoples are entitled to determine their own future. The U.S. defined aggression to include the use of force, overt or covert, against the political independence of any other state or interference with the affairs of another state.

The study shows that our motivation and policy was to avoid Communist control of South Vietnam at all costs and to demonstrate our ability to have our way in world affairs. We opposed a compromise settlement between the Vietnamese themselves. We

opposed neutralization. We opposed any Vietnam conference. We engaged in sabotage, covert operations, bombardment of North Vietnam, and sent emissaries to threaten unlimited armed attack to achieve our national aims.

Vietnamese forces under our command provoked counterattacks which we then used as a pretext for assaults which we called reprisals. The President obtained unrestricted power at a time when we were already ignoring the humanitarian requirements of proportionality. The Congress and the public were systematically misled.

The saddest mistake America made was to try to use military might as a substitute for the rule of law. We relied on the patterns of past history and failed to recognize the hopes of the future. Only when nations are tolerant enough to accept divergent systems and wise enough to build international institutions with authority to resolve disputes will we find enduring peace.

BENJAMIN B. FERENCZ
Former Executive Counsel
Nuremberg War Crimes Trials
New York, June 13, 1971

To the Editor:

The publication of highly classified material from Government files on the Vietnam war is in my opinion treason and it is my hope that you and your associates will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. As a very minor point, there will be no further copies of The Times in my home as long as you follow such policies.

RAY J. STANCLIFT Jr.
DOROTHY L. STANCLIFT
New Canaan, Conn., June 14, 1971



John Peter Zenger's trial for freedom of the press.