

Gen. Taylor's Rally

To the Editor:

Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor's "Let's Unite on Vietnamization" [Op-Ed March 10] has the qualities of both a bad joke and a bad dream.

It is nothing new, of course, to be lectured to on the infallibility of a long line of military brainstormers, going all the way back to the fortified hamlets and—by the way of interdiction raids, defoliation and "pacification"—winding up with Vietnamization and the "incursions" into Cambodia and Laos. What is new is the apparent ingenuousness with which General Taylor seriously expects everyone to "rally" behind our latest misadventures, "notwithstanding our past divisions."

The argument strains credulity. We have always had just three choices, the general tells us, "to advance, to retreat or to stand fast." He goes on to say that "unfortunately since 1967 it has been impossible to rally public opinion behind any one of these alternatives."

The impasse is easily resolved by the general, because "variants may be formed from elements of all three." This strange animal that retreats, stays put and advances all at the same time is called Vietnamization. And since it does all three, it follows that it must satisfy all three: dove, hawk and superhawk.

This brilliant bit of reasoning from one of the architects of the greatest military and moral debacle in this country's history goes a long way toward explaining how we got there in the first place. It is too late, unfortunately, to explain to General Taylor the revulsion so many of us have felt against this war.

Anyone who believes, as he does, that the present scheme of sustained saturation bombing in three countries, the open-ended warfare on the ground, the prospect of an increased Chinese role in the conflict and the certainty of prolonged incarceration of our prisoners of war—that all that must have "elements of appeal for most shades of American opinion" has surely lost all grip on reality.

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Syracuse, N. Y., March 12, 1971