

# Letters to the Editor

## Vietnam Debate: Honoring a Pledge

To the Editor:

The recent South Vietnamese incursion into Laos has demonstrated beyond question the seriousness of the problem the South Vietnamese are facing in their struggle against North Vietnam's aggression. It is clearly evident that over the last six years the North Vietnamese have established in southern Laos a well-fortified base, with tanks, gun emplacements, caves, bunkers, trails and roads, that constitutes not only a vital part of their supply lines but also a serious direct-offensive threat to South Vietnam, as the latter takes over more and more of the defense of its own territory.

What appears to be needed, if the freedom and security of South Vietnam are to be adequately safeguarded, is an end-around play strategy, similar to General MacArthur's Inchon landing operation in the Korean war, one supported by American air and naval power, aimed at effectively cutting the North Vietnamese route supplying its forces poised near the northern border of South Vietnam for the purpose of making renewed attacks upon the South.

Now that the myth has been broken that North Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos are inviolate, the similar myth that North Vietnam, as the aggressor nation, cannot be invaded by South Vietnamese troops should also be demolished. Fanciful fears should no longer be allowed to bedevil United States policy.

It is not too late for the United

States to adopt a more realistic perspective toward the crisis in Southeast Asia. Lost in the debate of the last few years in this country about the Vietnamese war has been the fact that the United States made a commitment against aggression by North Vietnam upon South Vietnam that four successive American Administrations have considered to be in our national interest. This commitment had overtones of an idealism, now largely repudiated, fostered by our desire to go to the aid of a people suffering through no fault of their own.

If the final result of the Vietnamese war is a defeat and humiliation for the United States in its effort to aid a small nation to survive, the future global effects upon its foreign policy will, I believe, be incalculable.

ERNEST T. CLOUGH  
Marblehead, Mass., April 13, 1971