

Letters to the Editor

After U.S. Troops Withdraw

To the Editor:

As antiwar activity boils up this spring, I think the importance given to flat statements on the morality of the war by all concerned, including the "five Democratic Presidential hopefuls" mentioned on your front page on April 22, is particularly interesting.

It is good that morality is of such great public concern, but as long as we are on this level, I think all hopefuls, Presidential or otherwise, should explore this morality in greater depth. Specifically, just what are the full moral implications of America's total and immediate withdrawal from Vietnam and Southeast Asia?

We have to take some time to look at the background. The last South Vietnamese leader who was really credited with standing up to U.S. pressure was President Ngo Dinh Diem. There were stories at the time that President Diem was prepared to make his own accommodation with North Vietnam, which conceivably might have spared America a great deal of the problem. At the same time it is highly likely that the United States in some way participated in events which led to President Diem's overthrow.

We thereupon encouraged his successors to carry on the fight and increased our active support. We built the Vietnamese Army along American lines and, even beyond that, literally told them to stand aside while the U.S. Army came in to "win the war."

Now the U.S. Army is pulling out, and we are asking the Vietnamese to carry on. We have left them committed to a military organization that they can neither afford nor operate by themselves. It is dependent on complex logistics backup and air power. Should we yank this apparatus out, this would indeed be putting the Vietnamese on the end of a kite and cutting the string.

Under these circumstances, a unilateral termination of help without genuinely mutual discussions and cooperation with the South Vietnamese would be immoral.

Beyond the military withdrawal there is very little said by antiwar leadership concerning our economic obligations in Vietnam. So we have dropped five million tons of bombs. The answer is not withdrawal but a tremendous commitment to reconstruction.

Our leadership should dedicate itself to a Marshall Plan-type assistance for Vietnam and Southeast Asia, open to North Vietnam as well. It should be an international effort, possibly even including Communist countries, but the U.S. has to go up front with the resources, even though it may have to share control of the funds.

Finally, I believe those who oppose the Administration are failing themselves and their country by their totally negative attitude toward this agonizing problem. What we finally do in Vietnam will be living with us five or ten years from now, deeply affecting our image of ourselves and our strength and hope for the future.

T. JEFFERSON COOLIDGE Jr.
Boston, April 27, 1971

To the Editor:

It has been said that an immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Vietnam would result in an immediate Communist take-over of South Vietnam and years of bloody retribution.

Perhaps this might occur, yet a Communist take-over of the South would have a positive effect. Following the Second World War, the Vietminh were able to set up schools and hospitals, lower taxes, create fair-labor laws, in-

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stitute land reform and, in general improve the situation of the peasants throughout the whole of Vietnam. If the North could take over the South, with its vastly superior organization, financial resources and abilities compared with those of the Vietminh, it would do much the same thing for the Southern peasants, who are starving from overtaxation, misuse of land and American defoliation.

The threat of years of bloody retribution does not stand up to history. Following the French Indochina war, the Communists in the North retaliated against fewer than one dozen anti-Communists, non-Communists or collaborators with the French, while in the South the anti-Communists retaliated against several hundred anti-French in Saigon alone.

Furthermore, those 880,000 refugees from the North to the South who could be said to have left for fear of retribution did not leave for that reason. Some 120,000 of them were members of the French Indochina Colonial Army and their families, who left because they did not wish to live in a Communist state. The remaining 660,000 were Vietnamese Catholics who fled because of rumors of retribution spread by the agents of Ngo Dinh Diem.

No one except the members of the South Vietnamese Government who have exploited the peasants need fear retribution, and although they have the means to flee, they deserve retribution for their deeds.

The Communists would be welcomed as brothers in the South, where the peasants have long suffered because of French- and American-supported and installed dictators from Diem to Thieu and Ky. A recent Gallup poll taken in the South indicated that some 65 per cent of all South Vietnamese—want an immediate and complete U.S. withdrawal.

CHRISTOPHER DYAS
Ridgewood, N. J., April 25, 1971