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War Pressure on The President

IT WOULD BE GOOD to be able to say that the bombing of North Vietnam had left the critics of Mr. Nixon speechless, but alas no. Vesuvius finally shut off, but never the appeasers. Their supply of funk is inexhaustible. The best that can be said about them is that they have been rendered incoherent.

Do you remember the argument that said there is no point in bombing North Vietnam because it doesn't do any good, all it does is fortify North Vietnamese resolution? Remember? New York Times, April 17: "Only massive American bombing, including heavy raids in North Vietnam itself, enabled the South Vietnam forces to halt the Communist advance." FILED 47X 10

Suddenly we are told to believe that it has been the aerial intervention of the United States that has turned the tide.

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ALTHOUGH THE RAIDS would appear to be the most obvious response to the brazen military aggression of the North Vietnamese, the critics of bombing reach for every conceivable excuse to find fault with the dutiful reaction of President Nixon.

"America's involvement in the Vietnam war," says the New York Times, "cannot be satisfactorily ended until this country obtains the release of its prisoners of war. Every new air raid means more pilots shot down and captured. The number of American prisoners steadily grows. Thus, every raid not only brings death and devastation to Vietnam but postpones the end of the war."

Here is a gold mine of paralogisms: The more prisoners the North Vietnamese hold, the more anxious the United States is to give in in return for the release of the prisoners. It is just as easy to release 1000 prisoners as to release 500 prisoners. So that the increase in U.S. prisoners, if it has any effect at all on the war, would tend to shorten, not lengthen it.

And now Senator Humphrey crosses the line and joins the ranks of the opposition. At this writing it is not known whether he will vote for Senator Muskie's resolution calling for withdrawal under any circumstances, but the logic of his statements, if that is not over-generous, is in that direction. If we withdraw at this point, leaving the logistic initiative completely in the hands of the Soviet Union and Red China, then all will have been in vain.

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THE FOREIGN CRITICS are of course reliably one-sided. Of the 11,000 Swedes who paraded their resentment outside the American ambassador's residence in Sweden, not one is recorded to have objected to the use by North Vietnamese of Russian tanks to invade South Vietnamese villages. The new morality.

One sometimes fantasizes that the Scandinavians have discovered some kind of sexual kick in criticizing the United States: a fetish of sorts that provides a kinky kind of stimulation.

The morning's news carries the report of an observer who examined a Russian tank incapacitated just north of An Loc. He discovered that its dead North Vietnamese driver had been chained to his post. During the past three years it has been increasingly difficult to conscript South Vietnamese help for the North Vietnamese invaders.

Manifestly it is becoming difficult to conscript North Vietnamese aid for the North Vietnamese invasion. It would be interesting to hear Prime Minister Palme discuss this aspect of the struggle, since he has so refined a nose for poignancy.

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WHILE GREATLY ADMIRING President Nixon's resolution of hold the line, there is really no way of coping adequately with the thrust of some of his critics. Most of them are now pretty well committed to the notion of retreat, and most of those who now bewail the protracted war would have lashed out against President Kennedy or President Johnson if either of them had moved decisively to stop that war cold, saving the world the mountainous casualties which are the result of American ambiguity.

But the consistent critics — Barry Goldwater, for instance — are increasingly justified. What we attempted to do was to substitute a sort of social-political position for a military position.

We refused, over the years, to neutralize the military threat. And so it rises again, and again; and will again, until it is put out of action.