

# Letters to the Editor

## Which Way to Peace?

To the Editor:

North Vietnam, supplied by the Soviet Union, engages in a massive attack upon South Vietnam, across a clearly defined and internationally accepted boundary. A minority among us seekers of peace, much given to one-sided vociferousness, sees nothing to protest. But when the United States assists the South Vietnamese to repulse this attack, the counteraction is shrilly condemned. This is as if a burglar, murderer or arsonist invaded a neighbor's house and anyone in the community going to the neighbor's defense is the party at fault and deserving to be roundly abused. To use Senator Fulbright's word, this is indeed "bewildering," but not in the sense the Senator meant. Is this vociferous minority, then, really interested in peace? Or only in a fake world order of its own fantasizing?

This minority still fails to take account of the fact that the United States is but one party to the Southeast Asian situation, and if peace is to be brought to that area, not only one but both sides must desire and work for peace, both must refrain from acts of violence which can have no other result than to invite a violent response.

These are simple, comprehensible ingredients of any successful quest for peace. Why are they so elusive to our minority? Why must only the United States be watched, criticized, protested against, condemned for reacting to acts of aggression?

I grant that the other side has engaged in a masterly diplomacy of deception. But after four years can it not be distinguished for what it is? Must a minority among those of us seeking peace continue to obfuscate the problem by blindly insisting that

the United States "negotiate" when it has become clear that the other side is not prepared to negotiate? Must the mimicry of negotiation be prolonged so as to give the other side simply more time in which to abuse the United States publicly through mass media which must remain attentive as long as the mime persists? Must our minority continue professing not to see us dangled and played at the end of a yo-yo string?

This phantom diplomacy in Paris has long ago been spotted by those of us somewhat familiar with diplomacy for what it is and we suggest that our less discriminating colleagues in our quest for peace spend more of their time getting acquainted with diplomacy even though this may mean a little less time for agitation. This just might bring peace a little nearer.

SMITH SIMPSON

Annandale, Va., April 19, 1972

To the Editor:

In his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary Laird said that he would "not rule out the possibility" that the United States might blockade the harbor of Haiphong or mine the channel leading to it. He gave no indication of awareness that such an action would drastically alter the character of U.S. intervention and lead to a direct confrontation between the United States and not only the Soviet Union and Communist China but a considerable number of other states.

The hostilities in Vietnam do not, in terms of international law, constitute war—which would have to be declared by Congress. Nor are they authorized by the United Nations. The

U.S.S.R. and Communist China have supported North Vietnam with arms while the United States has supplied not only weapons but also armed forces to South Vietnam. At no time have the U.S.S.R. and China engaged in direct hostilities against the United States. All over the world countries supply weapons to friendly governments. It is a privilege of the U.S.S.R., China and other countries to recognize North Vietnam, as it is that of the United States to recognize South Vietnam. Recognition is largely a matter of discretion.

In these circumstances, the mining or blockading of the accesses to North Vietnam would constitute a direct act of hostility against outside powers with which the United States is not in a state of war. The states that recognize or trade with North Vietnam include allies and friends of this country. The only possible comparison would be the "quarantine" imposed by the Kennedy Administration on the high seas in the Cuban missile crisis, but there is a decisive difference. The threatened installation of Soviet missiles on Cuban territory was clearly directed against the United States, and the quarantine — though of doubtful legality—was a limited response to this threat, morally supported by the overwhelming majority of nations.

But the mining or blockading of the Haiphong harbor would be regarded by the overwhelming majority of countries as a deliberate internationalization of the Vietnam hostilities by the United States. It is alarming that one of the most senior members of the Administration should envisage such a possibility without any apparent awareness of its extremely grave implications.

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