

NYTimes  
'Commitment' to Intervene in Vietnam

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To the Editor:

In offering "correctives" to a recent letter protesting the Vietnam war, Perry Laukhuff says we have treaty commitments which oblige us to be in Vietnam. But he neglects to identify these more specifically since in fact no such commitments exist and in fact we ourselves have broken the few treaties involved. We made a mockery of Walter Bedell Smith's Statement of Accord to the 1954 Geneva Agreement by installing Diem and encouraging him to ignore this agreement on the dubious grounds that he hadn't been involved in its negotiations, contrary to Article 27 regarding successors.

We avoided invoking the machinery of the SEATO treaty because Article 4 would have obliged unanimous consent of its membership and we recognized that Pakistan would not have cooperated. We sabotaged the 1962 Geneva Agreements by undercutting the neutralist government of Prince Souvanna Phouma to force him to resume the civil war on our own terms.

As to our obligations under the

United Nations Charter stressed by Mr. Laukhuff, Article 37 requires any conflict such as that in Vietnam to be taken before the Security Council in lieu of unilateral intervention; this we have not done.

Mr. Laukhuff also justifies our presence because of the brutality and unpopularity of the North Vietnamese Government, specifically citing the emigration of Catholics from the North and the execution of thousands who remained. It cannot be denied there was widespread brutality in the year or two after partition, but we have little evidence this has continued.

In contrast, Diem sustained a far more brutal policy of repression in South Vietnam, putting as many as a million people to death by mobile execution teams under the notorious guidelines of Law 10/59. It was the unpopularity of this policy as much as anything else that rekindled the civil war in South Vietnam, and this brutality is perpetuated even today under programs such as Operation Phoenix, which continue to be supported and advised by our Government.

President Eisenhower acknowledged years ago that at least 80 per cent of the population of Vietnam would have voted for the Communist Government of Ho Chi Minh if given the chance. American policy seems to have been to kill and intimidate as many as possible of this majority in order to prop up a "democratic" timocracy presumably representing the interests of those who survive of the minority, as well, of course, as our own in global politics.

If Mr. Laukhuff, a former employe of the State Department, can accept this strategy, let him at least acknowledge its cynicism and the bankruptcy of his "good reasons" for doing so.

EDWARD JAYNE  
Amherst, Mass., Sept. 23, 1972