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Vietnam Needs More U.S. Aid

PRESIDENT FORD has asked Congress to provide supplementary arms aid for South Vietnam, and the word on Capitol Hill is that Congress won't agree. If that pessimistic prediction is accurate, it is bad news not only for South Vietnam, but for the whole of the free world as well.

We are not asked to send men. We are asked to provide money only — money in the form of arms, ammunition, aviation fuel. We are asked only to provide the people of South Vietnam with the means for fighting back. Observers in Saigon agree that if such aid is not forthcoming — if it is not forthcoming now, within the next six weeks — the Communist invasion will succeed.



In the two years since the Paris agreement was signed, Moscow and Peking have redoubled their aid to Hanoi. The North Vietnamese, in contemptuous violation of the truce, have infiltrated the South with 170,000 troops. The Communist forces are armed with new artillery, rockets, and anti-aircraft weapons.

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IN MY OWN VIEW, at least, the arguments in favor of providing the requested arms are compelling. We are not talking of "aid to President Thieu," or of "propping up the corrupt Thieu administration." In the continuing struggle between freedom

and slavery, Thieu is one poor, weak, mortal man. He does not matter. We are talking, rather, of the people of South Vietnam, and of the faint, flickering candle they have fought so valiantly to keep alive. What do we say to these people? Let the candle go out?

Every American knows of the sacrifice the United States has made already. The sacrifice of the people of South Vietnam is not so widely understood.

In recent weeks, the South Vietnamese army has suffered one hundred casualties a day. It is as if an American army were losing a thousand. Upwards of two million South Vietnamese are directly involved in the war effort. It is as if we had mobilized 20 million.

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IS IT CONCEIVABLE that the Vietnamese people would keep fighting if it were only for the honor and glory of "a corrupt little dictator"? This is nonsense. If the Thieu government did not command a large measure of popular support, it would have been toppled long ago. What, then, could impel the people to resist? Why has their will not failed? They do not regard the triumph of the Communists as inevitable. They ask only: Give us arms! And they will fight on.

Of course the requested aid should be provided — quickly, generously, unstintingly. Simultaneously, every possible diplomatic pressure should be applied to Peking and Moscow. If there is such a thing as "world opinion," that opinion should be marshalled against the North Vietnamese aggressors.

Washington Star