

Letters to the Editor

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Vietnam: A Case for Recrimination

To the Editor:

The constant reiteration by the Administration, including its highest spokesmen, of no recrimination following the ten-year Vietnam debacle seems to be a device whereby responsibility for this debacle is to remain historically unassigned. The theme that the American people were in general accord throughout most of the years with the Southeast Asia adventure is a device whereby responsibility is assumed by no one in particular because it is presumably retained by all. But this is assuredly not so, for prominent men, in and out of public life, were the leaders in this adventure, and indeed we now know that by and large they lied to the American people to justify their actions.

I am for recrimination, not because I was always against the war and would thus delight in my revenge but because we Americans must assure that these same leaders will no longer have the opportunity to drive us into another disaster. I am for recrimination then because with it we can point out who exactly were responsible. I am for recrimination because many of those responsible, in one way or another, are still in positions of power, such as the Presidency, the Vice-Presidency, the Secretary of State, the head of the World Bank, the head of the Ford Foundation, the Ambassador to Iran, the various men who are still being consulted on foreign policy, *ad nauseum*.

In other societies, in other times, such men would be shamed from office and from public life; our society seems to have introduced a great measure of tolerance toward disastrous national errors. I am for recrimination in that, for once, such a policy would drive from office and from power those whose mistaken judgments and personal predilections proved so costly to American society, not to say to the peoples of Southeast Asia. In a certain sense, they are war criminals, and a policy of recrimination would place this responsibility upon them.

Thieu is only partially correct in

saying that Americans are untrustworthy, for only some Americans were and are untrustworthy, perhaps to him, but certainly to the American people. Can we as a nation abide in positions of leadership these untrustworthy men?

PHILIP SIEKEVITZ
New York, April 23, 1975

To the Editor:

The President has informed us that the Indochina war is "finished" and that the time has arrived for "reconciliation, not recrimination."

Certain issues, however, must still be raised. Americans unfortunately are much too willing to adopt a *mea culpa* attitude toward the Indochina debacle. Should we not rather place most of the blame on the shoulders of the aggressors, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong? Depiction of the current North Vietnamese advances in terms of "liberation" clearly overlooks the human tragedy and suffering of the South Vietnamese people at the hands of an expansionist North.

In the interests of justice, it is incumbent to determine the purpose of North Vietnamese participation in this bloody war. Realistically, it ought to be admitted that their motivation rests on imperialism.

A final note: Laos and Thailand are weak and unstable. Presidential statements announcing an end to the war, and implicitly an end to forcible American support for Indochina regimes, do not augur well for these smaller states and will probably endanger their security; fighting is already going on in Laos. While an end to the tragedy of Indochina is sorely needed for the reconciliation within American society, statements which announce an end to American support can only serve to encourage aggression. In this regard, this situation is directly analogous to the precipitant that encouraged aggression against South Korea.

MARK MEIROWITZ
New York, April 24, 1975

The New Refugees

To the Editor:

One does not know whether to weep or laugh at the announcement of the U.S. Government waiver of the immigration laws to admit 130,000 Vietnamese to this country. Who are the Vietnamese for whose sake the law is waived? At whose expense are they admitted to the United States, and for what purpose?

They are the Vietnamese government officials who have betrayed and robbed their own people, who have amassed fortunes in American taxpayers' money and who have talked endlessly about the Vietnamese soldiers' obligation to die for them and the American people's obligation to keep them in power. They do not need any special waiver of laws in order to reach a safe haven. Most of them have more money than most Americans have seen or will ever see in their lives, and they have passports to leave a country they have never served.

If there is any mercy or pity left in the approach of our Government, it should be spared for the poor and benighted peasants who have been bombed and pillaged endlessly—it should be spared for those lost souls in refugee camps where starvation and sickness is the order of the day.

Does this nation have to support every corrupt individual of every dictatorship in and out of power, or is its purpose to announce to the corrupt governments of the world (which governments are, incidentally, for sale to the highest bidder) that it will take care of them when there is no more to be pillaged in their own lands? Must all this be done in the name of humanity?

Little wonder the American people have lost faith in their Government. What else is there to do?

PARVIN MERRYMAN
New York, April 23, 1975