

Cost of Delaying Peace

To the Editor:

President Nixon's politically well-timed prospective peace announcements do not alter the fact that even if it all materializes he could and should—in fulfillment of his 1968 campaign pledges—have achieved the result four years earlier. Henry Kissinger's response that at that time "the other side consistently refused to discuss the separation of the political and military issues" scarcely justifies the four years of continuing and escalating warfare, including the bombing and invasion of Laos and Cambodia—actions taken without the consent or knowledge of Congress—and is hardly evidence of earlier Administration eagerness for peace.

Consider the consequences of the failure to achieve peace at that time—apart from the needless deaths of 20,000 American fighting men since Nixon became President, the 110,000 wounded, the prolongation of the imprisonment of increasing numbers of our men and the deaths of thousands of noncombatant Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians. But these are irreversible tragedies for which no rectification is possible.

Consider the costs which confront the American people as a result of the four last years of the war. They include:

☞—The \$62 billion sunk into the Southeast Asian quagmire.

☞—The resulting and continuing in-

flation at home—a figure difficult to estimate but which has already exacted a heavy toll.

☞—Reparations (apart from such items as the indemnification of France for its destroyed embassy at Haiphong and the killing of its diplomat and other embassy personnel). Dr. Kissinger has announced that "the United States . . . will in the postwar period contribute to the reconstruction of Indochina."

☞—Benefits for the veterans of the past four years, including the care of the wounded and drug addicts, an inescapable obligation.

How are we going to pay for all this? Inevitably, President Nixon (whatever his denials now) will seek a massive tax increase.

Our military budgets—plus the weaponry for other nations included in our Administration's foreign-aid programs, which in the dictator-ruled countries is used not for defense but to quell dissent at home—are responsible for our financial troubles and any prospective tax increases.

On the other hand, if George McGovern had been elected, he would have avoided a tax increase, taking funds from the military extravagance and seeking additional revenue by the closing of the existing scandalous tax loopholes. These expensive issues have never concerned Richard Nixon, whose policies tend to perpetuate and enlarge them.

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