

The Longest War

By Stuart Symington

WASHINGTON—One of the primary reasons this tragic war continues is because a majority of the Congress has consistently refused to confront the executive branch with obvious inconsistencies in its various statements about Vietnam.

On Oct. 26, Mr. Kissinger told the American people that peace was at hand. Later that same evening, in a campaign speech from Kentucky, President Nixon announced that he would achieve "peace with honor" instead of "peace with surrender."

Clearly these statements conveyed the impression that an agreement had been reached and that within a short time our prisoners would be returned and the war would be over.

We now know that no peace agreement had been reached Oct. 26, and that none has been reached since. In fact, the bombing of North Vietnam has been the heaviest of the war, with the highest United States casualties in planes and airmen; and the North Vietnamese press asserts that our recent bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong has caused "the death of hundreds of civilians and the destruction of thousands of dwelling houses."

It was on Oct. 26 also that Mr. Kissinger told the people but a few minor details needed resolving before final peace, making reference to the usual translation difficulties. Among those problems still unresolved, however, were the presence of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam, the function of the Council of Reconciliation, and separate nationhood for South Vietnam.

But these three issues are the ones we have been fighting over since the start of the longest war in the history of the United States.

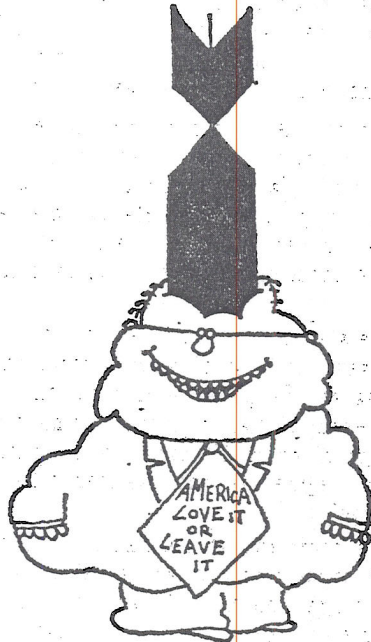
Despite the now obvious need for more investment of our increasingly limited resources in such problems here at home as poverty, pollution, housing, energy and educational facilities, the President continues to rush billions of dollars of more military equipment in support of the totalitarian regimes of Southeast Asia.

The President's recent veto of two rehabilitation acts caused Marine Lieut. Robert Muller, a Vietnam veteran who is now a paraplegic, to observe that although it was not irresponsible for him, as a platoon commander in Vietnam and adviser to the South Vietnamese Army, to call in air strikes to kill people and destroy villages at heavy cost, it was "irresponsible" to put up the money to give him adequate medical care in a veterans' hospital.

For some nine years I have been warning my colleagues about the grow-

ing danger to our economy that is inherent in our continuing unfavorable balance of payments, at first only in the public sector, now in the private sector as well. As the ratio of our assets to our liabilities continues to decline this is causing increasing apprehension in all economic circles, both at home and abroad.

A visit earlier this year to the Far East, including Japan, as well as one last month to Europe, including various countries behind the Iron Curtain, convinced me that, in this nuclear age, everyone realizes that a military attack against the United States would be an act of suicide.



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These trips also convinced me that the next great struggle will be an economic war. If true, that bears in significant practical fashion on the great and growing danger of our continuing to pour additional billions of dollars into the Vietnam theater to achieve a military victory against that little country.

Every American should consider that, as of now, we are just as unprepared to wage an economic war as we were unprepared militarily the day before Pearl Harbor.

Let us hope that during this session of the Congress we, the representatives of the people, will face up to our constitutional obligation and demand all pertinent facts necessary for wise decisions with respect to the allocation of our resources. I believe a wise decision would be one that required an end to this sad and wasteful war.

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