



# Will the U.S. Re-enter Vietnam?

**Joseph Kraft**

**E**VEN as the last of the war prisoners reaches home, and the final GI quits the rice paddies, the road is being paved for another American entry to the Vietnam War.

This is what the fateful visit of President Nguyen Van Thieu to the United States this week is all about. It is also the issue behind the President's statement on Vietnam last Thursday night and the constitutional debate in the Senate over the bombing of Cambodia.

The starting point for the re-entry mechanism is on the ground in Vietnam. All accounts indicate that the cease-fire has broken down.

Much of the blame goes to the Communists. Hanoi has never abandoned the objective of unifying all of Vietnam. To that end the Communists have staged military actions in South Vietnam.

But just as much of the blame goes to President Thieu. In absolute violation of the spirit of the cease-fire, he has at all times denied the legitimacy of any Communist presence in South Vietnam. He has put pressure on Communist enclaves in ways bound to provoke military retaliation.

★ ★ ★

**T**HE UNITED STATES does not have to be dragged into all of this. Whatever moral obligations are owed by this country to South Vietnam can be more than honored by the dispatch of military hardware.

Moreover, the cease-fire agreement itself provides a diplomatic remedy against its breakdown. That is the 12-power conference, including Russia and China, which met in Paris on February 26 to endorse that agreement.

But President Nixon, now as in the past, seems chiefly concerned to build up South Vietnam against Communist pressure. Even in announcing the cease-fire, Mr. Nixon, in direct violation of its spirit, recognized the Thieu regime as "the sole legitimate government of South Vietnam."

This week the President will accord Thieu the honor of a summit meeting at San Clemente. Then he will send him cross-country on a tour clearly designed to thicken further the American commitment to South Vietnam.

★ ★ ★

**M**R. NIXON has already spelled out the implications of that commitment. In his press conference of March 15 and in his nationwide TV address last Thursday, the President asserted the principle of unilateral American military intervention to prevent the Communists from violating the cease-fire. Despite the turmoil it would unleash in this country and the ill-will it would rekindle abroad, President Nixon is prepared to resume bombing in Vietnam to save the Saigon government.

The task of starting a barrier against re-entry to the war now devolves entirely on the Congress — which means the Senate.

To be sure, nobody in the Senate has a stomach for reopening the Vietnam issue. But if the President keeps pressing forward, there is no alternative. The country needs to be warned about the dangers of further commitment in Vietnam, and the right agency is a new set of hearings by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.