

Vigorous Reactions

Presidents Nixon and Thieu are agreed on the need for "appropriate vigorous reactions" to continuing violations of the cease-fire agreements by North Vietnam. But the question remains whether President Nixon was appropriately vigorous in reacting also to the continuing violations of the truce terms by President Thieu.

Fighting is raging in South Vietnam, sometimes as intensely as it was before "peace" was declared. Is this solely due to Hanoi's perfidy? Reports from the area make it clear that Saigon—as well as Hanoi—has initiated many of the engagements. Violation of Article 10 of the Paris accords must be just as legitimately a source of concern to the Vietnamese Communists as the equally illegal build-up of North Vietnamese forces is to the Saigon Government.

Washington claims that Hanoi is also violating Article 20, which bars military activities by foreign countries in Cambodia and Laos. But United States bombers also continue to carry on military activities in Cambodia.

There is a Ping-Pong character to these violations. They go back and forth; each response brings its counter-response. Each side gets away with what it can. It was good to read, in the San Clemente communiqué, of President Nixon's assertion that "the United States views violations of any provisions of the agreement with great and continuing concern."

Pointedly enough, President Thieu did not join in the sentiment of that paragraph; but this concern should surely have been conveyed to him in terms far more blunt and ominous than official niceties would permit in a public diplomatic communiqué.