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An Over-Reaction To Hanoi Trips

MANY CITIZENS, angered by the recent enemy - serving statements in Hanoi of actress Jane Fonda and former Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark, no doubt hailed a move in Congress this week aimed at prohibiting future unauthorized trips by Americans to North Vietnam.

Under a bill reported to the House floor, all Americans would be barred from travel to nations "in armed conflict" with this country unless authorized by the President as in the national interest. Violators would be subject to 10 years in prison, a \$10,000 fine, or both.

At first reaction, the proposed legislation may seem more than warranted by the mischief done by the many U.S. anti - war activists who have traveled to North Vietnam and acted as transmission belts for enemy propaganda. Yet sober consideration, we think, shows the measure to be an ill-advised over-reaction.

The travel - ban issue would not have arisen if we were in a declared war instead of "in armed conflict." Meanwhile this is a free country and its citizens do and should have the right to act and say what they will under our normal constitutional guarantees.

This results in anger and frustration, of course, as in the spectacle of the latest prison release to an anti - war group under circumstances of maximum propaganda value to the enemy. Our belief is that most Americans are not deluded.

In brief, we do not need restrictions on our citizens to counter enemy propaganda. Our most powerful counter - weapon is truth, coupled with the free speech needed to make it known. Thus, whenever the Jane Fondas and Ramsey Clarks sound off on the enemy line, they are immediately answered and exposed by those supporting this country and its efforts to stem Communist aggression.

Jane and Ramsey have done far more harm than good to themselves and to their cause by statements and actions which would be nothing less than treason in a declared war.