

building broad support for its implementation.

If the resources scare has concentrated the mind of Mr. Kissinger and this Administration, ordinary citizens can do a great deal to see that it stays concentrated and help to concentrate the mind of Congress as well.

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EXCURSUS II

The War That Never Ended

To some Americans it still comes as news that the war in Vietnam is not over. In the year and a half since the signing of the cease-fire, more than 44,000 soldiers have been killed in combat. As usual, there is no accurate count on the thousands of civilians killed, wounded and made homeless. At least, it is said, America is out of the war. One wishes that were true. The Saigon regime could not fight, and possibly could not survive, without continued billions of dollars and technical support from the U.S. This year the United States is spending ten times as much on South Vietnam, with a population of 19,000,000, as on India, Pakistan and Bangladesh combined, with a population of 711,000,000. This does not mean, unfortunately, that we would be helping others if these billions were not being poured into South Vietnam. But the connection between human need and resources is further and grotesquely distorted by our apparent entrapment in South Vietnam.

Graham A. Martin, U.S. Ambassador in Saigon, said in March, 1974, that \$850 million is needed by South Vietnam in 1975 and a "somewhat lesser amount" in the following year. Two more years of heavy economic aid is all that is needed. The Vietnamese, he said, "are ingenious, hardworking people. . . . I am convinced that now the situation for an economic takeoff on the Korea-Taiwan economic model in a very much shortened time is here."

Were Mr. Martin a credible witness, his argument might offer some moral reason for continued involvement. No one would, in any case, suggest cutting Mr. Thieu off without an advance notice of some months, perhaps even a year. Mr. Martin is not to be trusted, however. He is the man who wired Secretary Kissinger, warning him against giving "an honest and detailed" answer to Senator Kennedy's inquiry about our

Indochina policy. He is the same man who, in April of this year, smeared Dr. George Webber, President of the New York Theological Seminary, as being responsible for the deaths of Vietnamese school children attacked, allegedly, by Viet Cong fire. (Dr. Webber responds, quite reasonably, that not only did he, while in South Vietnam, have neither contact nor influence with the Viet Cong, but Martin stubbornly refused to help Dr. Webber's delegation make contact even with Saigon officials.) Mr. Martin, it has been noted, behaves more like Saigon's ambassador to the U.S. than our ambassador to Saigon. Except a Vietnamese would not so egregiously assault American sensibilities and common sense.

Others paint a very different picture of South Vietnam's future. According to an in-house report made by the World Bank, South Vietnam will still need \$770 million a year in aid in 1980. The figure for 1990 is \$450 million a year. Neither figure includes military aid, now running at well over \$1 billion a year. General William Westmoreland, now seeking political office in South Carolina, recently spoke out for continued U.S. support of Saigon. Comparing it with South Korea, he holds out hope for an economically and militarily viable South Vietnam. Such comparisons are now as stale as they have always been implausible. He goes farther and says: "I would not rule out a peacefully unified Vietnam in the far distant future." The General makes clear he is not thinking of a mere twenty or thirty years. That tunnel gets longer and longer. Maybe the reason there is no light at the end is that it is going straight down.

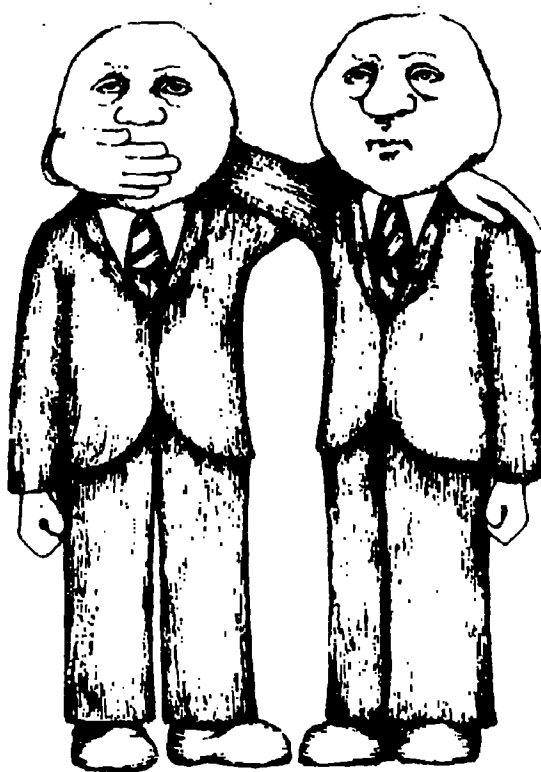
In his response to Senator Kennedy, in which he said he was not taking Mr. Martin's advice to be evasive, Secretary Kissinger spoke of an "obligation" to Saigon that was inherent in the Paris cease-fire agreement. He did not answer the objection that the agreement has been consistently violated by the other three parties (Hanoi, Saigon and the PRG) and, at least implicitly, by the U.S. in the past year and a half. For too many years of U.S. policy in Indochina obligations have been ineluctably breeding obligations. As to the related argument that we cannot walk away from our investment in South Vietnam, Eric Sevareid recently remarked: "Investment is a curious term for a tragic blunder."

There is every inclination to give Mr. Kissinger the benefit of the doubt. But one remembers that in February, 1969, he expressed confidence that U.S. forces in Vietnam would be out by the next fall. He is credited by some with ending the war. In fact, he and Mr. Nixon waged the war during its four most bloody years, in which more people were killed and bombs dropped than in any prior

period. Which is to say that Mr. Kissinger can be wrong, tragically wrong. He asks for patience. If he says the situation will have improved in a year or two so that massive U.S. aid will not be required, he will not be believed. And with good reason. If he implies that there is some secret understanding by which U.S. support will be withdrawn in a year or two regardless of the situation in South Vietnam, he will be accused of further executive disdain for the Congress and the American people. And with good reason.

But aside from the financial cost (no little consideration), what is the real damage done by continued U.S. support of the Saigon regime? Of course Thieu is a dictator, the government is unspeakably corrupt, there are tens of thousands of political prisoners. Except for the scale of it, the same is true of many other countries. One might even prefer living in South Vietnam to living in North Vietnam. At least in the South there is some, albeit limited, chance to protest the horror. For some in South Vietnam U.S. aid is undoubtedly a great boon. For the great majority it means perpetuating a war to decide which dictatorship they will live under. The American people have long withdrawn their uncertain consent for an open-ended commitment to the dictatorship that is presumably the lesser evil. Nor does it seem unlikely that, under the gun of a sure timetable for real U.S. withdrawal, a Saigon regime could not reach an accommodation with the North that is far short of capitulation. To that end, the vaunted détente with China and Russia might be used to reduce, or even eliminate, outside support from all sides. That, it would seem, is the most tolerable of the unhappy alternatives facing the Vietnamese people.

In addition to the damage done the Vietnamese, there are other global and national interests to be considered. The argument is made that U.S. credibility would be severely crippled were we suddenly to abandon the Saigon regime. In view of the history of the past twenty years, the word "suddenly" seems singularly inappropriate. Critics of U.S. policy say they are not advocating abandonment, only that we stop pouring billions into sustaining the illusion that there is a real government in South Vietnam. They contend that our support for the brutal pack of thieves in Saigon is much more damaging to U.S. credibility and influence than any so-called abandonment. Even for those not opposed to the idea of American empire, present policy makes little sense. An empire should demonstrate its ability to cut its losses. Vietnam is, by any imperial calculus, a loss for America. Finally, the critics fear that the present policy might at some future point



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seduce us again into direct military involvement. That prospect may seem incredible to many, but recent years of international and domestic change have gone far toward making the incredible commonplace.

However one assesses the damage our policy is doing to the Vietnamese and to America's world influence, it continues to corrode our domestic life. Watergate is the generic term for a disease of which Vietnam is very much part. The disease is disdain for the political processes that make democracy a possibility. Regarding Vietnam, the Executive Branch and the Military have lied, covered up and deliberately frustrated the clear intent of the people's representatives. The most recent, but by no means the most grievous, instance was in April when the Congress turned down a supplemental \$474 million for Saigon. No sooner was this done than the Pentagon announced it had "discovered" an additional \$226 million that had somehow been overlooked through an accounting error. The pattern is perfectly clear: The Congress will, at the discretion of the Executive and the Military, be consulted, but let no one confuse consultation with control. If the politicians disagree, those in charge will find some other way to go ahead and do it anyway.

There have been times when those who favored a particular policy have applauded a President's cleverness in bypassing a recalcitrant Congress.

It was probably a mistake to do so, but in more conventional times the system seemed strong enough to accommodate the occasional shell game. If there is one thing political leaders do not need to demonstrate right now it is that they can be terribly clever in bypassing the cumbersome procedures established by law, custom and an elementary sense of honesty.

Present Vietnam policy is based upon the kind of deviousness that has jeopardized whatever remains of public confidence in the effectiveness of our political system. Put quite simply, the Executive has no political mandate for its actions. (Whether it has a legal mandate, the Supreme Court has once again refused to say.) If present policy is to continue, let its managers ask for such a mandate from the people's representatives. They do not ask, because they know they will not receive. Representatives have a lot on their minds these days, not least being the impeachment of a President. They should be reminded, however, that while they are about the business of restoring confidence in the system they might do something about a continuing war against which the great majority of Americans has voted in every way they know how.

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EXCURSUS III

Social Ethics Montage

One should not read the *New York Times* before breakfast. The impact of the moral sensitivity of one's contemporaries is hard on an empty stomach. It produces visions of our age that seriously hamper getting oneself together for the day's business.

Lieutenant Calley's sentence for the My Lai massacre has just been reduced from twenty to ten years by the Secretary of the Army. The reason is "mitigating circumstances." In the words of the Secretary: "Lieutenant Calley may have sincerely believed that he was acting in accordance with the orders he had received and that he was not aware of his responsibility to refuse an illegal order." The *Times* editorializes on this development under the heading "No-Fault Command."

There is also No-Fault Terrorism in other quarters. Sincere Calley, it may be recalled, was convicted of the murder of "not less than 22 Vietnamese." The score of the black terrorists on the

streets of San Francisco is only twelve to date. Whites in this case, not Vietnamese. Since survivors have given a description, police have begun stopping young black men answering the description. This procedure was characterized by the Northern California Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union as "a racist outrage and a massive violation of the constitutional rights of every black man in the city."

I tend toward paranoia anyway, and doubly so early in the morning. Sometimes I even read items in the *Times* that are Unfit to Print (and that a mentally more balanced reader might deny having seen). It seems that this dumpy woman has been shooting people in Los Angeles. The police are questioning dumpy women. The Southern California Chapter of Angry Women United is protesting unequal law enforcement. . . .

But what is one to expect from liberals? Thank heaven for the conservatives in our midst, who still have sound moral instincts. After all, they're even starting to move away from Nixon. What else are they doing? Well, two major projects right now are the "right to life" amendment, which would prohibit abortions, and the campaign to restore capital punishment. Both projects are being pursued with equal vigor.

There is also the Conscience of the World. It is about to condemn Israel for its raid into Lebanon, following the massacre at Kyrat Shemonah. Remember what happened? Arab terrorists crossed the border from Lebanon and machine-gunned Jewish children. Thereupon the Israelis crossed the border into Lebanon and blew up some houses (a technique, by the way, developed in Palestine by the British, who wanted to discourage terrorism without killing people). The Austrian delegate to the U.N. has drafted a carefully worded statement, which expresses moral disapproval of both outrages (without naming either).

Things in New York are fine. We will soon have data showing that our crime rate is lower than Stockholm's. The gay rights amendment is making headway in the City Council, since its proponents are apparently prepared to exempt transvestites from its protection (what about my right to walk the streets dressed in my grandmother's finery?). Smokers may be segregated in restaurants, to protect the rights of nonsmokers. They will have a red "S" pinned on their lapels.

No essential service is on strike right now, though the United Air Pollution Workers are threatening to release quantities of carbon monoxide into the atmosphere over Staten Island to put pressure on ongoing contract negotiations.