

people have, that the bombing of targets in North Vietnam is intended to lead to negotiation, some of those reasons are immediately clear. Negotiations are possible only when there is something to negotiate and both sides are willing. Before the bombings in North Vietnam, our fortunes were so low that we had little with which to negotiate, and there was no reason for the opposition to negotiate themselves out of a military victory. The bombings help to redress that imbalance. But the willingness to negotiate must also be present and if no signals come from Hanoi there is no place to start. It would simply reverse whatever progress has been made to call for negotiations without some assurance that there would be a reasonable response. We have as yet no such assurance.

If this assumption about U.S. policy has any validity it is clear that many plans and contingencies must be worked out covertly. One cannot inform the U.S. public without informing the world. The citizen is pushed further and further away from those decisions that will determine the future. He has once again come up against what Robert J. Manning has termed "the treacherous demands that the facts of international life impose on our democratic society."

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What is the concerned citizen to do when faced with "these treacherous demands"? Sympathize with the plight of the man who is forced to make the decision? Turn the task over to the experts and forget about it? Accept the political impotence of the average person as part of the price our society demands? Or express one's views as strongly as possible, realizing their limitations, and become a part of the problem for the decision maker?

This is a constant question, but Vietnam has

presented it to many people in a particularly acute form. Suggestions, criticism, demands for clarification, expressions of confusion—all have come pouring in to the White House. Because so many of the voices come from religious groups one Washington clergyman was moved to say that he didn't know any clergyman in the country whose views on Vietnam were worth a hoot. The basis for this judgment was, of course, that clergymen are no more informed than other citizens about the situation in Vietnam, and the opinions of non-experts have little value. There is no doubt that he has a real point. Amateur opinions about technical problems are rarely helpful.

More recently, at a vigil protesting American military participation in Vietnam, Mother Mary Berchmans, a nun from the college of New Rochelle, N. Y. said, "While I cannot offer a program for what the State and Defense Departments should do, there are some things I personally cannot do or, by silence, in effect support. I think the churches have to witness to the human and moral issues involved. Even if we cannot make a complete judgment on all social, economic and military factors, we can still make a moral judgment on the war's basic inhumanity."

Mother Mary Berchmans, too, has a point, although our State Department may find it difficult to evaluate and impossible to use. Taken together, the statements of the nun and of the Washington clergyman point out the weaknesses in our attempts to discuss political decisions in ethical terms. We cannot, quite obviously, all become experts in the disciplines necessary to arrive at sound military and political decision. But neither can we simply withdraw from political involvement. We clearly need, as a people, more and better public discussion that attempts to relate our proclaimed principles to political deeds.

J. F.

in the magazines

What should be the limits of American intervention in Vietnam? And what are the alternatives? As we go to press, these are some of the reactions to the questions which were posed most forcefully last month with the announcement of "retaliatory" raids by United States and South Vietnamese troops upon North Vietnam military targets. At this moment the situation is uncertain enough—and unstable enough—

that it can rapidly shift and outdistance these views. But among these views are those that will help to determine that shift, whenever it takes place.

"Vietnam cannot be judged as an isolated phenomenon. The truth is that an American defeat in Vietnam will embolden the Communists and their allies

around the world—in Zanzibar and the Congo, in Cuba and Venezuela, in Italy and France, and most of all in Moscow and Peking.

“Those who oppose this view clutch at the hope that the Russians will block the Chinese from Southeast Asia and that Premier Kosygin travelled to Hanoi with that purpose in mind. But as Professor Z. Brzezinski, director of the Research Institute on Communist Affairs at Columbia University, has pointed out, it is at least equally plausible that the Russians had reluctantly concluded that the Chinese were right in their argument that ‘struggles of national liberation’ are the surest way to worldwide Communist victory and that Khrushchev’s fears of American strength were exaggerated. ‘Accordingly, the Soviet leaders decided to revive their links with the more revolutionary factions of the Communist movement even while trying to maintain the *détente* elsewhere.’

“It is important that the Russians not get this dangerous notion confirmed. We do not want them to unlearn the lesson imparted in the Cuban crisis of October, 1962.”

*William V. Shannon in Commonweal
(March 5, 1965)*

“We were urged once before to intervene in full strength in Vietnam—when the French, whom we had been aiding against Ho Chi Minh’s guerrilla army at a cost of \$800 million a year, faced defeat at Dienbienphu. . . . But Eisenhower held back. He remembered that he had been elected on his promise to end the war in Korea, and that in the course of the campaign he had said that if there had to be fighting, Asians should fight Asians. But if he unleashed the carrier aircraft, American troops would have to be sent in. . . .

“Eisenhower was troubled also by a moral question: even in war, morality, or some simulation of it, plays a role. He sought a Vietnamese coalition that might give moral meaning to intervention and could not find it. Nor can it be found now. We conceive it to be in our national interest to keep Southeast Asia non-Communist, if not capitalist in our own image. That is the reality; statements like the President’s ringing peroration to the Boy Scouts, ‘We shall take up any threat, we shall pay any price, to make certain that freedom shall not perish from this earth,’ is mere fustian. If our national interest requires victory in Vietnam, then international morality, such as it is, requires that we do our own fighting. On a moral basis, we cannot expect Asians to do our fighting for us, and as a practical matter we know they will not; that is why we are losing in Vietnam. No amount of gunpowder, high explosives or napalm will alter these facts.”

*Editorial in The Nation
(March 1)*

“The strategic issue, the fundamental issue, is simply this: does American and Western power stay in the Southeast Asian region, or get out? And as to that, it is apparent that no decision has been taken in Washington. From the standpoint of the strategic issue, the present war in South Vietnam, whether or not tactically extended a bit beyond the borders, is only an episode. If the decision is to stay, then the eyes of our soldiers will have to be raised not simply to the border crossing points plus, perhaps, Hanoi and Phnompenh, but to the limits of the entire theater—to Jakarta, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila, Taiwan, and, too, to South China and on to Lopnor and the other lairs of China’s nuclear bomb. The making of the positive decision would be quickly revealed by the transformation of posture and operations over the lands and waters of that vast theater. Let us add that it gets very late in the day for a positive decision: were it made two years ago, the Vietnamese situation need never have reached its present almost catastrophic stage.”

*Editorial in the National Review
(February 23)*

“The action of the United States and South Vietnamese governments in bombing military targets in North Vietnam following last weekend’s guerrilla attacks in South Vietnam (on two airfields and two U.S. barrack areas) are irrelevant to South Vietnam’s real problems, and dangerous to the peace of the world.

“They are dangerous, not only because of the possibility that they may draw China and the Soviet Union into the Vietnamese struggle, but also because of the precedent they have set. If it is now accepted internationally that it is legitimate to hit back at countries which support or direct guerrilla movements, then the military hardware manufacturers are in for a good time.

“South Africa and Portugal could bomb Tanzania tomorrow because of Tanzania’s support for violent liberation movements in southern Africa; Britain could bomb Indonesia because it has sent guerrillas into Malaysia; North Vietnam could bomb South Vietnam because of the guerrilla units that have been sent northwards to try (without success) to stir up trouble in the North. One only has to stretch a point or two to suggest that the U.S. should bomb selected military targets on its own territory because the U.S. has (albeit unwillingly) supplied vast quantities of arms to the Viet Cong.

“Of course, the idea of such a military free-for-all is absurd. But the precedent for it has just been set.”

*Peace News of London
(February 12)*

“It is easy to condemn American retaliatory raids on North Vietnam bases; much more difficult to suggest

a constructive alternative. Despite Communist assertions, the Americans do not like being in Vietnam. . . . The demand for a complete withdrawal becomes daily more vocal inside Congress and even within the Administration. The Americans would gladly pull out tomorrow if they could honestly persuade themselves that this would be the end of the story.

"But of course it might merely be the beginning. . . . the Peking government asserted, in plain terms, that its next objective was Thailand's subversion. . . . With the collapse of South Vietnam, Laos, already half-occupied by Communist troops, would be speedily swallowed, and the Ruritanian 'neutralist' Kingdom of Cambodia snuffed out. Thailand would then be exposed along a thousand miles of indefensible frontier. And after Thailand? The Communists and their allies could move into Malaysia from the north, to reinforce their assaults from the south. Worse still, Thailand's fall would expose the fat eastern flanks of Burma and, beyond Burma, the plains of India. The road to New Delhi lies through Saigon.

"Is this nightmare vision a mere fantasy? Perhaps. But it contains a hard thread of military and political logic, and corresponds with some exactitude to the published utterances of the Chinese leaders."

*Editorial in the New Statesman
(February 12)*

"Certainly the events of the past few days in Vietnam have been grave. Certainly the American decision to take reprisals against continuing attacks from North Vietnam runs the risk of leading to the most serious consequences. The real question, however, is whether a United States decision to sit idly by would not in the long run have had effects more dangerous again.

"It is one thing to advocate that in the interests of peace the Americans should all go home, another to ponder how this could be done and what the results of such a withdrawal would be. American and South Vietnamese retaliatory attacks, it seems, are now to be labelled aggression, whereas unprovoked military action launched against the south from Hanoi with Chinese or Soviet support is known as the legitimate aspirations of the Asian peoples. The attitude is ignorant, perverted and shows a basic contempt for the Asian people themselves who may be as desirous to defend their essential freedoms as anyone in Western Europe.

". . . Time and again the Vietnamese leaders have urged on the Americans the march to the North. The Administration has seriously considered this policy and its variants itself many times. Yet it has always held back because it was reluctant to retaliate in kind, and because it did not wish to face the inevitable world outcry that American action and American action only is aggression. Strike first and

you will probably get away with it, would seem to be the majority judgment on such matters: respond and you will be justly condemned."

*Editorial in the Spectator
(February 12)*

"In measuring the moral, political and strategic hazards of our Vietnamese policy, we should recognize that we are trying to manipulate China, one of the two great super-powers whose might impinges on many of the nations of the world. We are not, as we sometimes pretend, an innocent idealistic nation helping a small nation preserve its freedom because we were once also the pawn of an empire. All our calculations, both in morals and politics, are confused by this devious, propagandistic pretension with which our embarrassed leaders seek to beguile us. We are a people not fully at home with the hazards of global politics, hazards which we face because our economic strength and nuclear capacity have lifted us up to the frightful position of leadership of the free world."

*Reinhold Niebuhr in The New Leader
(March 1, 1965)*

"It is a misreading, I believe, of the realities to picture the President as having a clear-cut choice between expanding the war and negotiating peace. He has expanded the war under rigid controls, but he has expanded it. The test of any extension of the war is whether it produces a negotiation. Since a peace cannot be dictated in Asia either by the United States or by China, the real question is how, whether, and when, the eventual negotiation can be set going. . . .

"For the President to announce that he intends to devastate North Vietnam by a rolling bomber offensive would almost surely precipitate China, and probably also the Soviet Union, onto the side of North Vietnam. It would be a black day in American history if the President adopted this line.

"On the other hand, for the President to announce that he wanted to negotiate an American withdrawal would not only cause a collapse of the present government in Saigon, but it would place large numbers of Vietnamese in grave jeopardy of their lives. Although I do not share Sen. Dodd's crusading zeal for ideological globalism, I think he is right in pointing out that there would be grave risk to many who have worked with us if South Vietnam collapses. It must therefore be a primary concern of any American policy for a settlement in Vietnam to insure the protection of the lives of those whom we have been helping in this war. This would mean that there should be no American withdrawal before or during the negotiations for a settlement."

*Walter Lippmann in the Herald Tribune
(February 25)*