

This is Dave Van Arnam, who last week missed his first Fanoclasts Meeting in many a long year indeed, and who this week will be missing the Disclave, which will be the first of the old-line regionals I've missed since the Phillycon of 1963... *sigh*

FIRST DRAFT #165

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We continue now with our regularly scheduled Letter Of Comment from Ted Pauls, continued from last week...:

FOR TAFF: VOTE FOR STILES!!

←(We begin by picking up the last sentence of Ted's from last week)→:

Even today, those who urge "victory" continue to believe that if we push a little harder, send a few thousand more men, drop a few more bombs, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese will give up. ←(It wd take 10-to-1 superiority to win against guerrillas, was the substance of my last week's comment on this. -- dgv)→

But they are not going to give up. They have more troops in the field today than at any time in the past, and despite the logistics problems caused by our unparalleled bombing offensive, these troops are armed with better and heavier weapons than ever before. The US can blockade Haiphong harbor and blow Hanoi off the face of the earth; the war will go on. The US can destroy the agricultural dikes in the Tonkin Delta and thus take its place in history beside Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia as a perpetrator of mass murder; but the war will go on. As the enemy forces have adjusted their tactics to the new situation caused by the mass influx of well-equipped, well-trained, highly motivated American troops, the vaunted progress in the "military situation" has begun to slow: small unit actions are up, security in much of the country has actually deteriorated somewhat since last summer (because the South Vietnamese who ought to be conducting night patrols and harrying the small units of guerillas are fighting less ad enjoying it more), the situation in the northern provinces has become critical.

There is, as Westmoreland said, no end in sight. The enemy may choose to escalate the war again (escalation being a game that all can play) and commit the entire North Vietnamese Army (300,000-plus men) to the conflict. Conversely, the enemy may choose to revert to first-stage insurgency, which would leave the US holding the bag, since there'd be nothing for our artillery, airplanes and large units to attack. ←(We cd beat the North Viet Nam army in the field the same way we beat the North Korean army in the field; of course, that might well bring on the Chinese again with their phoney "volunteers," but don't let's pretend that the North Viet Nam forces represent some sort of bogeyman we couldn't deal with. -- dgv)→

Nine thousand American soldiers have died in this war (or 11,000 if you count the troops who have died in Vietnam of "non-hostile" causes, such as disease and accident). That doesn't sound like many in a war in which this country has been involved for five years, but nearly half of those casualties occurred since January 1, 1966, and 1000 Americans died in March of 1967. It isn't possible to make an estimate of the US casualties this war will eventually cost, but 100,000 dead and 500,000 wounded is by no means an extreme guess; it may, indeed, be too conservative. ←(Yes -- if things keep on as they are. That, however, is the key question... -- dgv)→

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Now, merely as a practical matter, it stands to reason that if you are in favor of continuing a war which will claim so many young Americans, you must have some substantial benefit for the sake of which this sacrifice should be undertaken. Yet I find nothing in First Draft #161 or in any of your previous writings which suggests that this war is important enough for the United States to pay such a price. (The assertion that the people we are fighting are Nasty People is not a justification; there are plenty of Nasty People in the world against whom we do not levy war.)

There are, of course, such hard-nosed, realpolitik arguments for the intervention, to which I suppose you subscribe, but I have never found these arguments to be very convincing. There is, for example, the argument that the US must prevent Chinese expansion; I perceive some acceptance of this idea in your current outburst against peaceniks. (←More basic than that is the respectable argument that the US must prevent communist expansion. Did we fight the Korean War for Siggie Rhee? In a shortterm fashion, yes; in the long run, look at the civilianized military government which has been reelected there, and which is bringing prosperity to a wrecked country over which the massed nations of the Earth fought to a grinding, shameful stalemate. -- dgv→)

Considered in the Bismarckian context of competing power blocs, spheres of influence, etc., I suppose there is something to be said for the view that the US, as a Great Power, has an interest in limiting the expansion of Chinese political influence. And, as I have already said, I would support military action to prevent any overt Chinese military thrust. But it is very foolish to equate the situation in Southeast Asia with Europe after World War II. In Europe, the problem was one of direct military conquest by the Russians (this was also the situation when North Korea invaded South Korea). Except for Yugoslavia, the "revolutions" in Eastern Europe were imposed by the Red Army, and I freely grant you that what happened was the same thing that happened with Germany in the 1930's. The Western powers had eventually to make a stand to check Soviet expansion, and perhaps they should have acted earlier; it's pointless to debate that at this late date. (←Oh, no, it isn't -- it is about the most relevant thing I cd think of, and I thank you for bringing it up. The heartrending Liberal rhetoric of those early days of postwar Russian/Communist expansionism was, peeling away the specifics, the same rhetoric being used today and during the entire period from then to now. Don't be beastly to the communists. It's as simple as that. Don't defend Greece, they're only agrarian reformers. Don't stop Mao, he's only an agrarian reformer. Don't stop the National Liberation Front, they're only agrarian reformers. Don't do anything about Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Iran, Tibet, South Korea, Malaya, the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, the Baltic nations, Viet Nam -- because if we are peaceful, we will persuade them to be peaceful. As evidence the Liberals cite Russia's bridge-building to the West -- at the same time Russia continues to support anyone who will be against us, and has consistently refused any workable detente between East and West. Pfui. The West's lack of response to the communist challenge in the post-WWII era is totally relevant to its present-day general lack of appropriate response. -- and if you really want to dig with me through the mounds of old wornout Liberal proclamations since WWII, we can do so, I suppose; all we'll find is the same attitude over and over again, repeated ad nauseam and forever demonstrating that the one thing the Liberals won't do is to look at the actual past record of their aims.

Well, Next Week Is
More Of This, so stay tuned, everyone, and hoping you are the sane...

-- dgv→)