

Once more ~~into the breach~~ it's Dave Van Arnam, at 1730 Harrison Ave., Apt 353, Bronx, NY 10453, bringing fans the nation over the lowdown on what is passing through his mind at this particular moment. Wow.

FIRST DRAFT #99

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I'd like to talk to you about my next couple of books I've got in the works.

...But instead, I'm going to talk about South Viet Nam...

The bombings of North Viet Nam have been resumed, to what one can suppose with no difficulty will be an ever-rising chorus of moans and groans from our home-grown activist pacifists, who have not that the matter past War Is Hell But Revolution Is Swell.

There are of course several reasons for opposing any or all of our policy in Viet Nam; you are not going to catch me saying "All Vietniks are Commies" or "All Vietniks are Traitors" -- or even "All Vietniks are Fools." On the other hand, I doubt if anyone can deny that there are some representatives of each of these categories among the movers and shakers of the Vietniks. There are times when bearing this fact in mind is of some relevance -- for instance, in judging the recent pilgrimage of Prof. Lynd to North Viet Nam, it is well to ponder over the presence on that journey with Lynd of Comrade Aptheker, a leading American Communist theologian. Cui bono? Who benefitted more from this trip, the U.S. or the communists? A question to keep tucked away somewhere there not too far back in the mind...

There are far more important questions to be considered, however.

One is, just what the hell more can the U.S. do honorably for peace in Viet Nam? There are only three ways peace can be achieved.

Win. (As we did in Greece, in Malaya, in the Philippines...)

Negotiate. (As we did in Korea and in Laos...)

Surrender. (As we wd do if we acceded to the Communist preconditions to negotiation, namely to recognize the Viet Cong, the so-called "National Liberation Front," as the sole representative of South Viet Nam, and to withdraw our troops from the country before the talks begin...)

I sure hope someone will tell me (not to mention Uncle Cornpone and Uncle Ho) if there is any other way to end a conflict than by the three alternatives underlined above? (We can get into whether my parenthetical remarks are just definitions in a moment.)

The trouble with the Viet situation is that it is almost impossible to get people to agree on the facts of the matter. Thus it is that such people as the very sadly confused Walter Lippman can prate endlessly about how it is "impossible for us to win a jungle guerrilla war," in the face of the plain evidence that we've done it before, more than once. (The Vietniks never never talk about Greece, Malaya, the Philip= pines, hell, even the Congo, where Gbenye and Soumialot's murdering savages have been almost completely eradicated, no particular thanks to the U.S.)

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So, First Point: we could win the war against the so-called "National Liberation Front". Let us not multiply confusion by pretending that for some reason a plain military fact is for some inexplicable and unprecedented reason an Orwellian unifact.

Perhaps the most confused thinking is found when analyzing the Vietnik attitude toward Negotiation. For some reason the Vietniks seem to think the Viet Cong & North Vietnamese are willing to negotiate, while the United States refuses to. However, tho there is certainly some precedent for setting preconditions of a mild and technical nature before negotiations begin, certainly it is easy to recognize when a side is sincerely interested in negotiating with the other side, and when a side's preconditions do not recognize the simple realities of the situation, one is at liberty, I suppose, to consider that they are in fact not at all interested in negotiating, but merely interested in scoring propogandistic points on the lackwitted bystanders.

How realistic is it, then, to set as a precondition the requirement that the main subject of the dispute be regarded as settled in favor of the one side before the negotiations can begin?

Make no mistake, this is the meaning of the Communist requirement that the Viet Cong be regarded as the sole representative of South Viet Nam ("in accordance with the programs of the National Liberation Front," as their phrase goes).

As if that were not enough, the Communists also cite as a prerequisite to negotiations, that all U.S. troops withdraw from Viet Nam before the talks can begin. (Yes, I know that's redundant; but it's quite clear, not so?) This is precisely the same as a union-busting Management insisting that the striking unionists go back to work before negotiations can begin on a new contract -- or a union's insistence that Management fire all its scabs and shut down completely before negotiations.

Now, there is no doubt but that in labor-management conflicts such forced deals have worked. But not in the affairs of great nations, great ideologies in conflict. What the Communists are saying is, "You leave, and let us take over completely. Then you and us can sit down and discuss whether we'll back down and you can come back." Sure.

Thus, the Second Point: The Viet Cong/NLF/North Viets/Communists cannot intelligently be described as being the least bit interested in negotiating anything at this time. (I shd think that if they were willing to drop the insistence on our withdrawal and on NLF takeover, we cd in turn stand to drop our refusal to sit at the negotiating table with the Viet Cong qua Viet Cong -- you will recall that at present we are insisting that we will only sit with them qua the military arm of North Viet Nam, which in itself is a rather unrealistic way of looking at things, tho hardly as preposterous as the Communists' current mythic daydreaming.)

Of course, we could let the Viet Cong take over, and withdraw all our troops. And when, around June or July, Thailand asks us for more aid against the Pekin-invented Thai National Liberation Front, do we go in? And do we then go thru the same charade as before, finally to leave Thailand to the Communists? And Burma? and Malaya? And the Philippines? And Indonesia? And Australia? And New Zealand? And Hawaii? Where do we draw the line. Or rather, and here I'd like to pro# John B., where do you think they will draw the line, and stop pushing? Eh? ++++ owell, hoping you are the sane...