

Destroying North Vietnam Will Not Save South Vietnam

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tention to an item on the AP ticker Feb. 8 (AP-151) which turned up in none of the many papers we read. "Anyone who has ever gone to war and fought on a perimeter defense," this dispatch said of McNamara's answer, "must be asking: What happened to the night patrols? Where were the listening posts? Has the practice of staking out enemy routes of approach been abandoned? Was there no illumination available, such as parachute flares or artificial moonlight—searchlights aimed against the clouds?" The AP dispatch said the questions "were asked of the Pentagon" and that the "official reply was, 'we don't know'." "Whatever the eventual answers," the AP concluded, "the explanation of the beating at Pleiku is going to be difficult."

Madison Avenue Clausewitzes

In this the AP is wrong. The Pentagon is accustomed to winning by public relations at home the battles it loses abroad. The AP dispatch was seen by only a handful of people while millions will read reassuring stories like the one in the *New York Times* Feb. 9 which quoted unnamed Pentagon officials as saying that defense arrangements at U.S. installations in Vietnam are "good". There will be an inquiry at Pleiku like that which followed the attack on Bien Hoa Nov. 1 but already "an official U.S. military assessment" has been turned in declaring that "a 'good job' was done in protecting the area." A few more such good jobs and we will have excuse enough to bomb Peking as well as Hanoi. We believe the Pleiku attack is another in the series of warning glimpses (like the Bay of Pigs) which should alert this country to the fact that while our military have enormous firepower and probably the best press agents in the world, they don't do so well in the test that matters. Their judgment, especially in guerrilla war, where the human factor counts more than the technological, is faulty. Their intelligence often turns out to be poor. But they have a great capacity for whitewashing their blunders and keeping the truth from the public. This is how military men have drawn great empires into catastrophe before.

It is time for the government to stop lying to the people.

GOP Repulsed Anyway

"Johnson's call for Republican and Democratic leaders to sit with the [National] Security Council was in line with his actions in bringing both parties into the decision making process on Vietnam. By this device he appears to have sidetracked a massive Republican attack on his Asian policies. Before the week-end's military action, Congressional Republicans had been waiting only for a Presidential assessment of an on-the-spot report from Saigon by his special fact-finder George Bundy before blasting away at Johnson's course. They suspected Bundy's recommendations would be for, as they put it, 'more of the same' in South Vietnam with no spectacular acceleration of American effort there. They were poised in this case to demand what House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan called 'forcible action'."

—AP in Washington Evening Star, Feb. 8.

The South Vietnamese regime is one we have tried to impose on its people against their will. The South Vietnamese military are cowardly, fearful and incompetent, more concerned with intrigue in Saigon than war in the field. Their only hope is to involve the U.S. directly in the fighting; that is why they want to "widen the war". Our military are frustrated because all their highly advertised and chrome-plated "counter-insurgency" has failed. All they understand is brute nuclear force and that is what they would like to apply. They want to change a war they cannot win into a war they believe they can win. Even in this they are wrong. Command of the air and the levelling of all North Korea did not save us from being pushed back to the 38th parallel and forced to make peace. If we bomb North Vietnam, we can destroy all its people have built up but we cannot prevent Gen. Giap's army from taking over all South Vietnam. And if the war brings China in—there is a military morass in which sensational bombardments will not keep our best youth from being bled slowly to death. The President spoke to the Boy Scouts about not letting freedom perish from the earth. This is a bad time for such inanity. It is not freedom we are protecting in South Vietnam but our prestige and our right to dictate to other peoples. The sooner we negotiate our way out the better for all mankind.

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