

Why U Thant Spoke So Bitterly of Our "Barbarous War"

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negotiated with Ho Chi Minh an agreement whereby the Viet Minh were to stay in the French Union in return for self-government. The breakdown of that agreement under rightist French military pressure led to the long war which ended at Dien Bien Phu. M. Sainteny has told the story with impressive magnanimity in his *Histoire d'Une Paix Manquée* (Paris, 1953). He will be received by Ho as an old and trusted friend, the fellow survivor of an historic lost opportunity for a peaceful and honorable settlement.

A Moment of Fragile Hope

Three days before the President's press conference, *Le Monde* (June 15) carried an *Agence France Presse* dispatch from Hanoi saying that diplomatic circles in the North Vietnamese capital had begun to feel a little optimistic about the possibility of negotiations. A "still fragile" hope was based, according to *AFP*, on three factors (1) all North Vietnam's allies except Peking ardently desire a swift end of the war, (2) While Peking 18 months ago violently attacked Moscow for trying to help the Americans make a face-saving withdrawal from Vietnam, Hanoi was now ready to do just that, (3) North Vietnam felt strong enough to make peace without loss of face itself, since it feels able to weather American bombing "however severe." *AFP* also reported that Premier Pham Van Dong, in the presence of a Soviet bloc diplomat, is said to have declared that Vietnam "like France, was an advocate of neutralization."

This moment of reviving hope for peace was a strange time for the President to announce, as he did June 18, that "We must continue to raise the cost of aggression at its source" i.e. to step up the bombing of North Vietnam. This was a good way to nip in the bud any possibility of success for the Canadian and French peace probes before they had a chance. Mr. Johnson's swift action to discourage peace negotiations recalls that his bombing of the North began in February, 1965, the day after the Soviet Premier, Kosygin, reached Hanoi on an earlier peace mission. A working group of scholars at Berkeley and at Washington University in St. Louis were about to release a 100-page "Citizens' White

A Peculiar Way to Pacify

"The President received an encouraging report from Wm. Porter, Deputy Ambassador to Saigon, on progress of the rural pacification program in Vietnam."

—New York Times, June 17.

"President Johnson complains that newsmen have ignored the civil pacification program in Vietnam. He'd understand why if he was a reporter trying to get some straight facts about it. At a White House briefing this week, Ambassador Porter and Presidential Assistant Robert Komer told newsmen the program has been so successful that large numbers of South Vietnamese are leaving Viet Cong areas. How many? Komer said the monthly rate is now 20,000. Asked how this compared with last year, he referred reporters to the State Department. It confirmed the 20,000 a month rate, but said it was 50,000 a year ago and added that refugee flow had nothing to do with pacification."

—Washington Daily News, June 18.

To speak plainly—it's our heavy bombing that forces people to flee from Viet Cong areas not "pacification."

Paper" on "The Politics of Escalation" this week-end in which they demonstrate that Mr. Johnson has escalated the war whenever pressure rose for peace at home or the possibilities of negotiation improved abroad.

Perhaps this is why, two days after the President's press conference, Secretary General U Thant of the United Nations spoke so bitterly of this "barbarous war" and again suggested that peace could be achieved only by de-escalation, by an end to the bombing of the North, and by a readiness to enter into discussions with those who are "actually fighting", i.e. the NLF. LBJ has set his face against each of these measures. The Citizens' White Paper shows that on several occasions U Thant's own initiatives for peace have been squelched by Johnsonian escalations. The only logical conclusion is that Johnson does not want negotiations which will entail withdrawal from South Vietnam. He wants to crush the rebellion and reestablish a South Vietnam securely within the U.S. orbit, even if that means burning up much of the country North and South in the process.

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Notices: Next Weekly (summer schedule) July 11. We gratefully acknowledge the services of Peter Osnos during the past year as editorial assistant.

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