

Letters

More on American soldiers in Vietnam

Editor:

Gillenkirk's review of Heinemann's *Close Quarters* (ITT, Aug. 31) simply does not ask the tough questions. Any book about American soldiers in Vietnam is first of all a book about blacks, other minorities, and working-class whites. These groups disproportionately constituted the Army's, and Marine Corps', combat units. It will not do then to describe Heinemann's characters, as Gillenkirk does, as "archetypal American men." If Heinemann fails to raise class issues, the reviewer in a left publication has the responsibility to tell us so.

According to Gillenkirk, *Close Quarters* will be a controversial book because it implies "rank-and-file culpability." This is a difficult question to treat in a brief review, but Gillenkirk accepts Heinemann's experience far too uncritically and draws unjustified conclusions from it.

There is no question that atrocities, as the grossest expression of "rank-and-file culpability," were committed by individual soldiers—atrocities that were not expressly "ordered." But to understand the war and its atrocities is to understand the context: 25 years of virulent anti-communism, a deep and pervasive racism, and the obscene nature of counter-revolutionary warfare as practised by a major power against the people of the Third World. In retrospect, the remarkable thing about the war may well be that so many ordinary soldiers acted as morally as they could in the face of situations which were, in Robert Jay Lifton's terms, "atrocities producing."

The unwritten history of the war is the history of infantry medics who refused to carry weapons, of whole units refusing to enter Cambodia and Laos, of individual and collective acts of resistance, and of more subtle acts of sabotage. To argue this is not to deny Heinemann's experience, but to suggest that Gillenkirk had a responsibility to balance the argument.

Gillenkirk states, in his conclusion, that the war was caused by the "blind aggressiveness of the American soldier" and gives this supposed "cause" equal billing with imperialism and militarism. This is a startling failure of logic and analysis. The actions of American soldiers were circumstances of the war, not causes of it.

Gary Kullik
Pawtucket, R.I.

Repeating old errors

Editor:

In your editorial, "Afro-Americans and Full Employment" (ITT, Sept. 24), you repeat an error of the old Socialist party when you write: "Racial prejudice and racist practices play their inveterate role in perpetuating this inequality, but if they were to disappear tomorrow the inequality would not...the property line is the key to the color line."

Consider: if the property line were to disappear tomorrow, would equality immediately ensue?

The Debs Socialists never saw the national question, the Negro question, the Jewish question, or the woman question as substantive and significant in themselves. They saw only the class question, and assumed these other questions would be solved as a by-product of solving the class question. Well, the experiences in socialist states in the past 60 years has shown that none of these questions is solved automatically as a by-product of solving the class question.

Communist theoreticians from the 1920s on had something of enduring val-

ue when they insisted that the Negro question was a special question, not *only* a class question. To underestimate white racism, or anti-Semitism, or sexism by seeing any of these as reducible to the class question and therefore solvable only in terms of solving the class question is, in fact, to delay solution of the class question itself.

That is why the black movement today makes affirmative action and preferential treatment central in its class struggle for jobs and upgrading. The blacks see the class question *plus* the national and do not chop logic as to which is "primary." It was an old bad habit of United States communists to insist that something was primary and then ignore the "secondary." We should be repeating neither the old Socialist nor old Communist errors.

-Morris U. Schappes
Editor, Jewish Currents
New York City

Editor's note: Morris Schappes' general point is well taken, and we agree with it. But we do not believe, nor did we argue, that one question is "primary" as against the other, only that they are interrelated. That does not, in our view, invalidate the point that "the property line is the key to the color line," any more than the latter should be taken to validate simplistic either/or formulas Schappes so cogently warns against.

Misspent resources

Editor:

As a legal worker, I object strenuously to your analysis of the struggle in the ACLU over their representation of the Nazis. Progressive legal people are constantly faced with the question of how to allocate scarce and precious resources.

The National Lawyers' Guild and the National Jury Project, which I belong to, make decisions daily as to which of the dozens of cases and issues needing legal work we should put our energy into, and how much of that energy we should spend on any one case. Where was the ACLU when the rights of Indian people to control their lives on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation were under attack? Where were they when the murderers of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were on trial in Chicago? Where were they with all their resources and skills during these fights for Civil Liberties?

I'm sick to death of people defending the "courageous" stand of the ACLU in their fight for "our" rights to free speech. Let the Nazis and their corporate backers pay for as much legal representation as they want. Let them spend their energy in dealing with the legal system. The precious resources of competent legal people, whether they are "left" or "liberal," should be spent in support of movements for social change and against the repression by the state of those movements, not in support of the advocates of racial hatred.

-Diane Wiley
Minneapolis, Minn.

Lover's inquiry

Editor:

I wish to thank you for your nice review of *Star Wars*. Being it is my favorite movie of all centuries. To date I've seen it 75 times.

Been a long time since I've enjoyed anything so much. In the process I fell in love with that beautiful flying ship Millennium Falcon. If you or any of your readers know anything about this trim little craft, please write to me. Again, thank you for your fine review.

-Lynn Folsom
Los Angeles

Drunk on statistics

Editor:

As a recovered alcoholic and a mental health worker of six years standing, I feel that there are some serious problems with the detox centers Howard Herunstadt is advocating (ITT, Sept. 21).

A striking feature around any detox center is that the majority of clients continue to drink, using the center for temporary shelter in maintaining the lifestyle. Few clients attain permanent sobriety, and these tend to be middle class people who can find satisfying alternatives to drinking.

Often these facts are hidden by promoters of alcoholism programs who prefer to work with days-of-sobriety-per-client-per-year statistics, which are meaningless for anyone whose next drunk could kill them.

Most detox facilities encourage alcoholic drinking. In their need to generate statistics (for example, clients-treated-per-month), detoxes find it hard to turn away clients who systematically abuse the facility. They frequently must accept anyone referred by police or hospitals, even if the client is known to be cynical about treatment.

A more sensible approach to alcoholism would be to let jails and hospitals continue to handle detoxification. Alcoholism workers could visit clients there and treatment emphasis could be given to long-term half-way-house type programs where clients get meaningful social and economic support.

Herunstadt should have mentioned why detoxes are cheaper than jails and hospitals. The paraprofessional workers who do most of the work in them are frequently hired at minimum wages.

-Hank Vandenburg
Sebastopol, Calif.

A word for the South

Editor:

Jim Aronson's recent essay on courageous journalists (ITT, Aug. 17) was much deserved recognition of their work and steadfastness. As he has so often in the past, Jim demonstrated his sensitivity to those fighting spirits who never make the national media's headlines.

Nevertheless, the column could have been enriched with the inclusion of some of the Southern and Appalachian newspaper persons whose lives and work has made a significant difference in their communities and in our region. Tom Gish, editor of the Mountain Eagle in Whitesburg, Kentucky, comes to mind immediately. So do Helen Brannon Smith and J. Oliver Emmerich in Mississippi. Reed Sarraf lost his job as editor of the Winston-Salem newspapers back in the late Fifties for supporting the Supreme Court's decision in the Brown case.

Journalists with high standards and unyielding principle live and still work in the South and in Appalachia. Persons of such caliber are not confined to the North.

-Frank Adams
Gatesville, N.C.

Back-seat driver

Editor:

Jean-Pierre Cot's claim (ITT, Sept. 21) that "Differences of opinion...should be overcome by mid-September, at the summit meeting of Mitterrand, George Marchais, and Robert Fabre" is followed three days later by the *New York Times* report of the apparent collapse of the French Left Alliance. Even if the *Times* exaggerates, Cot's inability to foresee the present rupture despite his high-level PSF position, shows how much ITT needs analysts some distance from the "organized Left" to give a clear picture of European affairs.

Cot also writes that "The nuclear protest marches may create such opportunity [for violence leading to insecurity]." Yet violence at French anti-nuclear marches has been primarily police violence against peaceful marchers. The "organized Left" could move to reduce such violence by joining the marchers. Given this week's electoral alliance self-destruction, the "organized Left's" pandering position on the anti-nuclear issue is laughable.

There is more irony in the "organized Left's" backwardness on nuclear power.

As evidence mounts that nuclear power is dangerous to working-class health and that labor-intensive solar energy is more job-creating, proponents of nuclear power will surely lose, not gain, votes. In fact, the PCF's staunch support of nuclear power, in the face of working-class health and job needs, is profoundly anti-communist.

Though I am often disappointed in ITT, you still have my critical support. On European affairs, if the choices are between foreign correspondent Johnstone, PCF apologist Bernie Moss and PSF bureaucrat Jean-Pierre Cot, I'll take Diana Johnstone's "back-seat driving" any day.

-Leland Neuberg
Stony Brook, N.Y.

Anti-tenure drivels hurts

Editor:

Of course, not everyone teaching should be; there must be checks on this. Yes, students are being passed on untaught; this must be stopped. But is ITT so hard up for material that it prints Nat Hentoff's indictment of teachers (Sept. 28) that conetns itself with blaming the negligence of teachers and the tenure system? Is it a socialist perspective to want to do away with one of the few gains in a long, bitter battle for job security in the jungles of the free enterprise system?

Can Hentoff and the sources he quotes imagine what it is to have to "teach" 40 nine-year-olds, interspersed with a few 12-year-olds? The difference this makes in an inner-city school or a suburban school?

What does it concretely mean to help Johnny who is having special troubles? Where does the help come from? After teaching seven hours and facing three more for correcting papers, hopefully not from Johnny's (untentured?) fourth-grade teacher! If America and the experts Hentoff quotes wanted to prepare for a responsible democratic future by focusing on the genesis of that future in its schools, they could.

But the drivels about malpractice of teachers, the disease of tenure, etc. is just another way of saying that we want the elite tradition to perpetuate itself and the "disadvantaged" to remain so. ITT: It hurts to say it, but you are slipping. Please leave the liberal news "services" in the garbage can.

-James G. Hart
Bloomington, Ind.

Correction: Last week's column, "The Supreme Court: Forward or Bakke?" was written by Norty Wheeler, an ITT associate in Tucson, Ariz. His by-line was dropped by mistake.

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

BE A MINI-DISTRIBUTOR OF ITT

Order bundles of 5 (10, 15, up to 25) copies of *In These Times* to be mailed directly to you every week for three months. You pay us in advance, at 20¢ a copy, and help us expand circulation.

Are you a natural?

Then fill in the coupon below:

Name _____
Street _____
Town/State/Zip _____

Send me a bundle of (check one):

☐ 5 ☐ 10 ☐ Other (up to 25) _____

I enclose 20¢ each, for 3 months, \$ _____

Ed Greer

Carter's urban plan to pay corporations for more of same



Let's blow the whistle on Carter's urban "program" before it ever gets formally presented. If we do so right now, we'll be in a much better position to carry on a campaign for something real; as opposed to waiting until the matter is in the policy-making process and trying both to veto it and substitute something of merit. If leaking the contours of the "program" to the *New York Times* (Aug. 31, 1977) was intended as a trial balloon, that is all the more reason to take a resolute stand right now.

The "program" is evolving as follows. A Cabinet-level study group—located in the Department of Housing and Urban Development—was set up, and it delegated its work to an urban development task force in the Treasury department. Apparently the key members of this task force are Robert Altman, Assistant Treasury Secretary for Domestic Finance and J. Chester Johnson, Assistant Treasury Secretary for State and Local Finance. Their last jobs respectively were partner in the Lehman Brothers investment banking firm and vice president of the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company.

Naturally, their "program" amounts to a series of incentives to manufacturing, real estate, and financial interests to induce them to increase their urban investments. Having correctly diagnosed that "secular economic decline is the core urban problem," these banking officials—fresh from observing the triumph of their colleagues in the New York City fiscal crisis—propose that it be solved on the cheap.

Establishment economists like to pontificate that "there is no free lunch" with respect to economic matters; and this homily surely applies with respect to Carter's new "program." Before ever examining its components, common sense dictates that a proposal whose total cost to the federal government will be \$1 billion is too desultory to do the job.

Since 1970 the annual purchasing power of central city residents (as a consequence of absolute population loss and the substitution of poor for middle-income families) has dropped by \$40 billion. The federal diversion of funds from the industrialized, urbanized northeast and midwest to the sunbelt runs about \$20 billion annually. And over the past decade the proportion of new housing investment in the northeast has dropped from 18 percent to 10 percent of the total. Similarly, the proportion of national commercial and manufacturing investment in the region has declined from 22 percent to 11 percent.

Carter reneges.

This unfolding catastrophe of massive urban capital disinvestment is paralleled internationally by massive capital exports to client states around the world. Together, these profit-maximizing shifts underlie the urban crisis, declining real income for the working class, and massive structural unemployment.

When Carter ran for the Presidency, he demagogically promised the trade unionists, mayors, black political leaders and liberal leaders of popular civic organiza-

tions that he would, in contrast to the conservative Republicans, positively respond to this crisis.

After his election Carter quickly moved to suspend legislative initiatives for full employment on behalf of "fiscal integrity"; he indefinitely tabled welfare reform and national health insurance; he advanced human rights in the Soviet bloc rather than at home or in nations under American hegemony. The new urban "program" is of a piece with Carter's complete subordination to monopoly capital.

Today the scope of reforms necessary to reverse the catastrophic human effects of the urban crisis would require unprecedented governmental *undermining* of private profits. For instance, strict controls over the flow of capital would be needed to prevent further urban redlining and the loss of manufacturing jobs. But as Claus Offe has recently reminded those who think Lenin is obsolete, the capitalist state intrinsically functions to serve the interests of monopoly capital: foremost by protecting the realization of surplus value by the oligopolies.

That is why Carter's urban "program" proposes to bribe the capitalists to rebuild the cities, instead of compelling them to stop bleeding them to death. The three components of the "program" are all fraudulent.

A corporate program.

The first is to permit private business to engage directly in urban renewal by giv-

ing them money to assemble large metropolitan parcels for new construction. No American city has yet been saved by urban renewal and there is no reason to think that any additional program will now succeed. When generous enough, such measures may induce direct investment in the given project. But their rationale is that this in turn will stimulate new private investment elsewhere in the same city.

As anyone can tell by looking at the slums adjacent to existing urban renewal projects, no such spillover effect exists. One billion dollars of land subsidies, while a windfall for urban real estate developers, is not likely to have more than a marginal impact on the trend of manufacturers and commercial interests to desert the cities.

The other two components of the "program" are the creation of tax-exempt industrial revenue bonds for new urban investments, and having a federal agency create a secondary market for these securities by buying, guaranteeing, and re-selling them. They surely will represent a windfall for banking investment houses such as Lehman Brothers and Morgan Guaranty. They will not, however, do anything to reverse urban disinvestment.

According to the *New York Times*, this "program" is Carter's response to "the recent criticism by black leaders" about neglecting the poor and the cities. If so, it is an effort at plantation politics.

Edward Greer is a former aide of Mayor Richard G. Hatcher of Gary, Ind., and teaches urban studies at Roosevelt University, Chicago.

Sidney Lens

Has nuclear warfare repealed the right to life?

More than any other recent President, Jimmy Carter has spoken of his concern for the people's rights. But there is one right bestowed on Carter by a combination of technology and the imperial presidency that cancels out the constitutional guarantees of every American citizen: the unchecked power to press a button and initiate a nuclear war that would kill hundreds of millions of people around the world—including one-half of the U.S. population.

The Constitution, of course, prohibits the president from initiating war, nuclear or otherwise. It vests that right exclusively in the Congress. But Congress has abdicated its responsibility to the President under the rationale that it takes only 30 minutes for a missile with a nuclear warhead to reach American soil from the Soviet Union, less if the missile is launched from a nuclear submarine. Obviously you can't assemble 535 members of Congress to debate and vote the issue in those 15 or 30 minutes.

But oddly enough, under the program called Crisis Relocation (CR) the Pentagon's Defense Civil Preparedness Agency says it will have "plenty of time"—days and probably weeks—while diplomats negotiate, to evacuate citizens from the cities and place them in mines, caves and rural areas on the eve of a nuclear war. CR does not explain why Congress can't be assembled during those days or weeks to debate and vote, or why a popular referendum could not be conducted.

The answer probably is that if Congress or the people voted *against* a nuclear war the American diplomats would have no "bargaining chips" in their negotiations with the Russians. The Soviets, it is said, would make no concession if the nuclear threat were removed. Thus the right of survival has been replaced by the right to be a "bargaining chip."

Americans have not discussed—or no-

The President has the unchecked power to press the nuclear button. High American officials feared Nixon might do so to avoid ouster. Have we lost our right to life?

ticed—this loss of their prerogative because they do not believe nuclear war will ever come. The great stockpiles of warheads, they think, are there simply to enforce a permanent stalemate, or "balance of terror."

Near misses.

The U.S. has enough missiles to destroy the Soviet Union; they have enough to destroy us—no matter who strikes first. Since each knows that nuclear war, in General Douglas MacArthur's phrase, is "double-suicide," neither superpower will start one.

There are several difficulties with this conventional wisdom. The most worrisome is that since 1950 there have been 13 occasions when the U.S. actively considered using the bomb. Five of these resulted from misreading of radar, as in the 1950 alert, when the early-warning system in Canada picked up formations of unidentified objects headed toward Washington.

The "objects" ultimately disappeared from the screen, ending the crisis; Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett's best guess was that radar had picked up a flock of geese. A decade later another panic developed when radar evidently echoed off the moon. In 1971 there were three such instances.

Six times, however, the U.S. seriously debated or threatened the use of nuclear bombs. President Eisenhower told the Chinese and North Koreans in 1953 he would use nuclear weapons if they did not come to terms. In 1954 the U.S. of-

fered France three nuclear bombs to use against the Viet Minh at Dienbienphu. The British and the Senate majority leader, Lyndon Johnson, dissuaded Eisenhower.

Four years later, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended, and the National Security Council temporarily approved, employment of nuclear weapons in the Quemoy-Matsu crisis. President Kennedy's team was prepared to drop nuclear bombs on Laos in 1961 and to use them during the Berlin crisis. According to Gen. William Westmoreland, former U.S. commander in Vietnam, nuclear weapons were suggested when U.S. forces were besieged at the Khe Sanh outpost.

On two occasions the near-misses involved the two superpowers directly, and could have resulted in total war. In 1962, during the Cuban missile crisis, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were closer to nuclear war than before or since.

And in October 1973, during the Yom Kippur war in the Middle East, a Soviet ship with nuclear bombs was dispatched to Alexandria, Egypt, while Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger declared a worldwide nuclear alert. According to a reliable Pentagon source, Kissinger ordered the removal of hatch covers from America's land-based ICBMs—a move intended to be photographed by Russian satellites as proof that America meant business.

Unchecked executive action.

Secretary of War Henry Stimson told an elite committee in May 1945 that the atom bomb represents "a revolutionary change

in the relations of man and the universe." Yet in none of the 13 near-misses, including the five accident situations and the two superpower confrontations that might have launched total war, did an American president consider seeking approval of Congress or the people.

Enlargement of the concept of "executive power" widened after World War II to mean presidents could engage in "acts of war," such as CIA-sponsored *coups d'etat*, without the sanction of Congress, and even that they could conduct actual wars, such as in Vietnam or the landing in the Dominican Republic, on the theory that these "police actions" were within their prerogative as commanders-in-chief.

After the 1962 missile crisis, Kennedy stated that had nuclear war broken out, "even the fruits of victory would have been ashes in our mouths." All that the U.S. had been able to build in three centuries, he said, would have been destroyed within 18 hours. Yet he did not seek any form of approval for what he was doing.

The end result has been further erosion of a basic American principle, accountability—the right of a citizen to be protected from arbitrary acts by a tyrant or an hysteric through an elaborate system of checks and balances.

At least insofar as the "right to life" is concerned that principle has been eviscerated. This point was brought home forcefully a few years ago when President Nixon was on the verge of impeachment for the Watergate crimes. There was genuine fear in high places at the time that he might use his "black box" (with the button in it) to launch a nuclear adventure that might save him from being ousted.

It was a revealing punctuation to the loss of the most hallowed of all rights, the right to life.

*Sidney Lens is a veteran journalist. His latest book is *The Day Before Doomsday* for Doubleday.*