

Saturday Review

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Vietnam

WHAT OUGHT to be one of the most important debates in recent American history is deteriorating into a wasteful and tragic encounter. Both the critics of the President's policy in Vietnam and the Administration spokesmen are talking past one another, imputing bad faith, failing to make contact at the vital points.

Many of the President's critics have failed to credit him with a desire as deep as their own for a cease-fire in Vietnam, for negotiations with all parties concerned, for limited objectives, and for the peaceful development of the region.

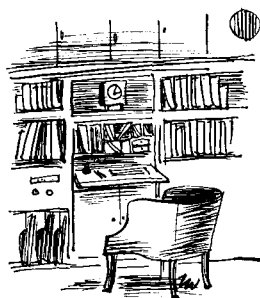
They have dismissed too easily the President's apprehension that the North Vietnam government will spurn negotiations so long as they believe there is a good chance the anti-Vietnam demonstrations in the U.S. will force the United States to withdraw and give the Vietcong an open field.

Nor have many of the President's critics recognized a possible flaw in their demand for the immediate use of the good offices of the United Nations in arranging negotiations. Actually, the President has encouraged the U.N. Secretary-General to attempt to draw North Vietnam and the Vietcong into negotiations. Secretary-General U Thant has made repeated but vain efforts in that direction. Neither North Vietnam nor the Vietcong has indicated any interest in dealing with or through the United Nations.

But if the President's critics have failed to credit the government with purposes similar to their own, the response of the Administration to its critics has

been singularly inappropriate. Administration spokesmen have done credit neither to themselves nor to the country by linking the growing anti-Vietnam movement in the U.S. with Communist manipulation and intrigue. Obviously, Communists throughout the world are trying to get maximum mileage out of the American predicament in Vietnam. But the Administration could make no greater mistake than to underestimate the genuineness of American concern over the course of events in Vietnam. For the government's policy in Vietnam is not an open-and-shut case. Too many questions about Vietnam have gone unanswered to warrant blanket approval. So long as this is so, it is natural and urgent that large numbers of Americans should call for answers—better answers than those that have been offered.

The first question calling for unambiguous, definitive answer has to do with our relationship to the South Vietnamese government. The President has said that the U.S. has gone into South Vietnam to protect that government at its own request. The South Vietnamese



government making that request, however, was violently overthrown and its President assassinated in a coup to which the United States was a party, according to former U.S. Ambassador Frederick G. Nolting, Jr.

If the United States was even indirectly involved in that coup, then questions with far-reaching implications must be raised. Under what Act of Congress or provision of the U.S. Constitution do American agencies abroad become parties to coups or subversion? How do we justify involvement in the overthrow of a government we say we have pledged ourselves to protect? Whether the Diem government was or was not equal to its job is beside the point.

More serious still, if the government of South Vietnam has the support of its people, as the Administration contends, then why should there have been reported upheavals and coups during the past year?

If the Vietnamese people are in fact behind their government, how does this square with the report that the present head of the South Vietnamese government, General Ky, is opposed to any election because not enough social reform has been instituted to assure popular support? Does the lack of this social reform have anything to do with the momentum behind the Vietcong? If the United States is in a position to shape the military policy of the South Vietnamese government, why have we not had equal influence in shaping social and economic policy?

The President has said that self-determination is our goal in South Vietnam. This means that the people have a right to choose their own form of government. How does this square with the reported statement of General Ky that he is opposed to free elections at this time? How does it square with the statement attributed to Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, in testimony before a Congressional committee, to the effect that the United States would not leave South Vietnam even if it were requested to do so by the government of South Vietnam?

White House sources said that the Ambassador's statement was misconstrued. Even so, a genuine question exists about our central purpose. Is it to protect the people of South Vietnam? Or is it to maintain a balance of power on the Asian mainland? Either way or both, we have an obligation to the people of South Vietnam far beyond the war situation. Have we defined this obligation in a way that can give them the kind of fervor without which even military victory cannot inoculate them against an opposing ideological virus? The U.S. has talked about the development of the Mekong Delta—and the project as described has a powerful dramatic thrust—but have

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Water Crisis

YOUR ISSUE OF October 23, devoted to "The Crisis in Water," is a valuable contribution to a subject of great importance. But mingled with so much that is far-seeing, wise, and helpful, there is one article that falls below the standard.

In "Myths of the Western Dam," Wallace Stegner makes a wholly unjustified attack on the Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Engineers, who build most of our great dams—one that ignores or plays down the vast benefits resulting from these dams: the conversion of great desert areas into highly productive ones through irrigation, the bringing to an end of destructive floods, and the production of low-priced electrical energy.

In California, where the pressure of population creates demand for many dams, there may be an occasional project of doubtful value. But in other great areas of the West the benefits of dam-building are beyond question. . . .

BENJAMIN H. KIZER.

Spokane, Wash.

WALLACE STEGNER's article, "Myths of the Western Dam," is the best material I've seen yet on the subject.

Most of what I knew about the proposed Bridge and Marble Canyon dams at Grand Canyon I learned last month while attending a conference of the Colorado Open Space Coordinating Council at Vail, Colorado. A Grand Canyon workshop was organized there that will continue to meet in Denver for the purpose of showing the public the folly of these dams. We hope for further public hearings—and for everyone to read Mr. Stegner's article.

MRS. ROBERT A. INMAN.

Denver, Col.

YOUR ISSUE OF October 23 was an excellent one. This summer while flying over Lake Michigan and Lake Erie, I was shocked at the murky filth below. It was so thick that a path was being cut through it by a boat.

John Lear's article, "What Brought It On?" was especially good, and so was Wallace Stegner's "Myths of the Western Dam." Living in the Tennessee Valley, we are grateful for the fine TVA system but glad that the Tellico Dam project was shelved. It would be an unnecessary flooding of usable land and trout streams.

MRS. ALBERT G. HOLMES.

Knoxville, Tenn.

Our Infinite Variety

I WISH TO COMMENT ON Morton Fried's article "A Four-Letter Word that Hurts" [SR, Oct. 2]. Far from hurting, a sense of race is very helpful. Next to pride of family, pride of race is more conducive to that sense of human dignity about which Mr. Fried likes to talk than anything else I can think of.

Mr. Fried points out what everyone



"Good heavens! Look what's moved in next door."

knows, that migrations, invasions, and wars have mixed up all the peoples of our planet, but like all generalizations his is only partly true.

A friend of mine once said to me, "Thank God I'm pure African." My liking and admiration for her immediately increased. Perhaps I felt a little envy, too, because I could claim no such undiluted ancestry. God, or evolution if you prefer, gave us everything in infinite variety. There is no attempt at dull, repetitious uniformity in trees, flowers, birds, animals, or any other

created thing. Let us thank God for all this delightful diversity.

JEANNE JUDSON.

New York, N.Y.

IT TOOK SR and Morton Friend to say something that's needed saying for a long time—that the whole concept of race is nothing more than humbug. Your argument was a persuasive one, but I still can't help wondering how many minds in Alabama are likely to be changed by it.

A. R. BACON.

San Francisco, Calif.

Words, Wonders, and Mrs. Wortman

LIKE HUNDREDS OF thousands of other wacky souls on this crazy planet, I have been a fan of the Kingsley Double-Crostics for aeons, and for years I was secretly in love with Doris Nash Wortman. As my ardor for SR grew year after year, I could finally contain myself no longer and I began to write her notes. We became pen pals.

However, it was not until last year that I met her. By then I had become greedily curious as to how she looked; I was pleasantly pleased on meeting her to discover she was *not* a little old lady with a beard and a bald head shaped like an egg.

In September, I was honored to be the guest of Doris and Elbert Wortman at their home in Vineyardhaven, Massachusetts. When I arrived, I found Doris sitting on her front porch, needlework in hand. When I saw it—well, I recovered my composure just long enough to take a quick snap of her [see cut].

AL MUENCHEN.

New Canaan, Conn.



Doris Nash Wortman