

Route 4, Box 33  
Santa Fe, N. M.

24 November 1965

Letters Editor  
The New York Times  
Times Square, N. Y.

Dear Sir:

Not since Hitler has there been such universal condemnation by the peoples and nations of the world of the policy of another country as is now being expressed against the military engagement of the United States in Vietnam. From outside the United States, in the non-communist countries, the war is seen in the perspective of imperialist power exerted against the poor of an Asiatic race in behalf of a corrupt government for a purpose that can never be realized because of the hate engendered by the consequences of the war itself.

Within our borders opposition has largely been confined to inchoate student protest against the inhumanity of our conduct. The dissenters are told that they do not face the facts of the situation in Vietnam. The overwhelming, irrefutable fact, however, is that the United States is engaged in a war in a distant land where it has repeatedly denied it has a national interest; a war to save itself from the humiliation of having to admit it was wrong.

News media condone the violence of the war as means to anti-communist ends; they report without shame the opinion of an American adviser that calculated terror is justified to pacify enemy villages. Ambiguous editorials support at once peace and war in grotesque attempts to fly with both the doves and the hawks. The facts of the history of Vietnam are distorted and the injustice and hypocrisy of our policy ignored. Unfortunate as the situation has become we are asked to believe that we cannot retreat now because of our commitments to the South Vietnamese people. It seems not to matter what image we present to these people, we have decided to save them whether they want to be saved or not, and by whatever means necessary regardless of the suffering we cause. We insist that the reversal of an untenable and unpopular policy is an unheard of thing to do.

Where are the clarion voices of indignation that our democratic traditions have in past national moral crises aroused to the highest expressions of disapproval? Where today are our Henry David Thoreaus, William Lloyd Garrisons, and John Browns whose words and

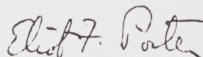
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deeds uncompromisingly condemned the evils of slavery a century and a quarter ago? Who now protests with equal vigor the searing of the bodies of Vietnamese women and children with flaming, clinging napalm and the tearing of their flesh with our most ingenious inventions for killing? If they are afraid that to oppose the Administration in unpatriotic or in time of crisis inexpedient, they should remember that it takes more than patriotism to right a wrong and that courage does not always follow a course of expedience.

But what is so terrible about this obdurate stand is that lacking clear annunciation of its goal, we have become caught in a web of bureaucratic operations so complex its structure is no longer well understood and no easy way exists to reverse our impecuous course. <sup>1</sup> So there is no turning back, no visible alternative but to pursue headlong our disastrous way, on and on to the Heart of Darkness until the words of the dying Kurtz echo down the halls of our conscience, "The horror, the horror."

Yours sincerely,



Eliot F. Porter