

Special Indochina Section

Introduction by Congressman Paul N. McCloskey, Jr.



Jeff Lowenthal—Newsweek

I wish that the four articles which follow could be read by every American who complacently accepts the proposition that President Nixon's present policy of aerial devastation of Indochina is "militarily justifiable and politically acceptable."

These were the words that *Life's* editorial writers used on February 19 with reference to the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos, an invasion which was possible only because of American aerial support.

"Militarily justifiable and politically acceptable!" If we have reached the point where air power, with its indiscriminate killing and maiming of children, old people, and noncombatants, is conceived to be a fine, clean American way to impose our will on the peoples of Asia, then I believe it is time to reexamine completely our national goals, ideals, and traditions.

Supposedly we are a peace-loving country, taking up the sword reluctantly and then only in defense of freedom. When we have fought it has been against "aggression" by others to protect people who preferred freedom to the shackles of dictatorship. Can

we honestly say today that the Thieu-Ky regime—with its seizure of newspapers, its number two presidential candidate in jail, its repression of dissent—represents a higher order of freedom for the South Vietnamese than would government from Hanoi?

Whatever the merits of our assistance to Saigon in the early '60s, however, it is the *method* of giving such assistance today in 1971 that is deserving of careful consideration. That method, "the unlimited use of airpower," is espoused by the President and Vice President as "our greatest trump card," the key to success of Vietnamization. Actually, the use of B52s, napalm, anti-personnel bombs, and helicopter gunships is nothing short of the murder and maiming of thousands of people whom we don't hate, with whom we are not at war, and against whom Congress has not authorized action of any kind.

We grow sick with horror over the slaughter of women and children at Mylai, yet we have quietly acquiesced to equal or greater terror in the villages of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam caused by the indiscriminate hail of

fire and steel from American bombers and gunships. The great bulk of civilian deaths in Southeast Asia is from American firepower, not Viet Cong. The strike of one plane with CBU cluster bomb units can tear apart the flesh of every human being in an area the size of a football field. The helicopter gunships described in "Maximizing Cobra Firepower Utilization" [page 8] can put a piece of steel in every square foot of the same area by a few seconds of finger tip pressure.

This is the firepower which the President counts upon to prevent shame and humiliation, to keep him from being the first American President to lose a war.

The President's thinking is based upon the premise that most Americans are willing to suffer the loss of a few hundred thousand Asian noncombatants if we don't have to view their suffering or hear their screams on our TVs. It is true that very few Americans have voiced disagreement with the search and destroy policies of Mylai, the "generating of refugees" and "free-fire zone" concepts, or the types of massive bombing which have reduced so many villages in Vietnam,

Laos, and Cambodia to bloody rubble.

Few have come forward to challenge the President's explanation that his purpose in going into Laos and Cambodia after January 12, 1971, was to save American lives. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the primary purpose in furnishing close air support in Laos and Cambodia is to kill as many North Vietnamese as possible, wherever they may be found and despite whatever number of Laotian and Cambodian farmers and villagers may be destroyed in the process. By moving the war into Cambodia and Laos with air power, the President seeks to lower current American casualties enough to win political support for a *delay* in our total withdrawal from Indochina—past the December, 1971, deadline favored by 75 per cent of the American people, according to recent polls.

The real purpose of this delay is to permit a decent interval to elapse after our withdrawal and before the Saigon government is again seriously threatened by North Vietnam. In a recent article in *The New York Review of Books*, Daniel Ellsberg quoted his former employer, Henry Kissinger, as

having frequently stated during 1968 that the appropriate goal of U. S. policy was a "decent interval" of two to three years between the withdrawal of U. S. troops and a communist unification of Vietnam. It is claimed that the interval is required to protect the country from the prospect of a new McCarthyism. This means that the wishes of 75 per cent of the people are being denied, and the war dragged on, in order to protect them from the possibility of a right-wing backlash. This policy of postponement is to save our face, not the lives of our troops. No major North Vietnamese threat to American lives in South Vietnam has existed since last summer. If the President wants to save American lives, he need only keep American troops marching to the coastal cities for transport back to the United States. Presumably, the 1.1 million men in the South Vietnamese armed forces could screen us from harm from the 200,000 or so North Vietnamese and Viet Cong presently scattered through the mountains of South Vietnam.

The whole concept of substituting aerial warfare for ground combat seems demeaning and cowardly for a nation which has taken pride in its military successes of years past. Having lost the stomach for taking casualties ourselves, we hire mercenaries to do our dying for us, and we do our killing from 30,000 feet, where there is no chance whatsoever to know who is being killed, enemy or civilian.

The air war produces not only indiscriminate deaths but refugees. In Cambodia alone, the joint U. S.-Cambodian operations created more than one million refugees in the first six months, as described by Peter A. Poole in "The Vietnamization of Cambodia" [page 13]. This staggering total, out of a Cambodian population of only seven million, has continued to rise since last September, when the figures were collected.

We talk of being "a Pacific Power," yet our whole conduct of the war in Vietnam bespeaks a contempt and dis-

dain for the races of the Pacific. We criticize communist nations in Asia for a lack of concern for individual human dignity, yet we pursue a policy which considers an Asian life as somehow less deserving of human dignity than an American life. We convicted Germany's General Jodl 26 years ago for relocating the civilian population in occupied Norway; yet we think nothing of forcing civilians in Indochina to move from the lands where they have lived for generations or face death and destruction from our air power. Worst of all, we have substituted a wholly indiscriminate air war for the selective destruction of enemy forces on the ground.

Win or lose in Vietnam, our current political use of an air war in Indochina will go down as a shameful chapter in American history. Our planes are not fighting the Luftwaffe or Japanese Zeros in a war of survival. In Indochina today we are merely assisting one group of Vietnamese against another. This is a civil war much like our own—the North seeking to reunify a divided country, the South seeking to set up a permanently independent and separate new nation.

None of my criticism of the President should be taken to mean that ending the war in Indochina would be easy. Quite the contrary, I believe it will require exceptional leadership to take the position that the war is unwinnable and wrong, and that it should therefore be ended as a non-victory without postponement. The obvious difficulty of that course lies in the unavoidable fact that it means the lives lost in Vietnam will be viewed as wasted, at least in part. Such a realization will be hard to take, no matter how well a political master might prepare and guide the nation. Indeed, Murray Polner's "No Victory Parades" [page 17] shows that a critical problem of most Vietnam veterans is the adjustment to the ambiguous purpose, the hazy objectives, and the nagging doubts of this war. Continuing the war will not add meaning

to the experiences of these men, nor to the deaths of those who have already been killed.

If there is anything more difficult than telling 55,000 mothers that their sons died for a mistake, it is knowing that the *next* mother's son died because we lacked the courage to face the mothers before her. Such knowledge means failure to the marrow—compounding folly with cowardice, or with excessive love of office.

To all the other costs of dragging out this war, one must add the sheer immediacy of the daily suffering in Southeast Asia. I know of no more powerful description of this horror than Ronald Glasser's "The Burn Ward" [page 25]. As the country becomes more anxious to end the war, and as more people including our soldiers lose zeal for a conflict whose avowed purpose is only to be ended, I think anyone who still attaches a value to continued fighting should read this article. Then he should weigh these costs, among the others, against the potential gains. There is a pernicious tendency these days to toss off the human consequences of organized killing with the phrase "war is hell." It rolls so easily from some lips that one almost suspects the words had been invented to avoid thinking about war's toll altogether. The vivid reality should rather be constantly weighed against the possible defense for the war. It should be considered especially before one supports the conscription of young men for forced service and possible death in the postponement phase of this forsaken war. And one should remember that the aerial war means that the victims in Dr. Glasser's article will be replaced by greater numbers of Asian civilians.

What American interests are involved in this continued conflict? For me, the answer in 1971, at least, is clear. It is a national tragedy that we should be mounting 1,000 planes a day over Indochina. There are *no* American interests worth killing or dying for in Southeast Asia. ■

Lenin: A Study on the Unity of his Thought
by Georg Lukács

translated by Nicholas Jacobs

This essay on Lenin, which first appeared in 1924, was intended to head off the massive criticism leveled at Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* by Communist Party leadership. It was a period in which Lukács was decisively influenced by Lenin and by Rosa Luxemburg, and his intellectual development proceeded concretely toward a political (Marxist-Leninist) interpretation of history and of literature.

In a postscript (1967) Lukács essentially reaffirms his view of Lenin as a practitioner whose tactical superiority lay in his ability to assess the socio-historical uniqueness of any given situation that required action.

\$7.95

History and Politics in the Soviet Union

by Nancy Whittier Heer

This book presents a detailed analysis of Soviet historiography after Khrushchev's secret speech denouncing Stalin, a period that is roughly spanned by the Twentieth and Twenty-Third Party Congresses, 1956-1966. The author uses source materials which she spent a number of years reading and translating — Soviet mass-edition texts and pamphlets, scholarly monographs, articles in historical journals and in the press — to construct a schematic chronology of developments in political history and related political events under Khrushchev and his successors.

\$12.50

The USSR Arms the Third World:

Case Studies in Soviet Foreign Policy

by Uri Ra'anán

"Uri Ra'anán, professor of international politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, in this well-documented book . . . examines in detail the motivations of and political maneuverings behind two large weapons deals: the Soviet-Egyptian arms agreement of 1955 and the Soviet-Indonesian arms arrangements of 1957-65." — *The Washington Post*
"What is Russia's interest in arming Egypt? This, and the question of the larger Soviet role in the Middle East and Asia, is the subject of Uri Ra'anán's *The USSR Arms the Third World*. A veteran Sovietologist, Ra'anán has assigned himself the formidable task of investigating the genesis of Soviet penetration into the Middle East; for this purpose he focuses on the "Czech"-Egyptian arms deal of 1955 which, he maintains, was the first major manifestation of what eventually became a concerted Russian effort to establish a political foothold in the region." — *Commentary*

\$10.00

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action/reaction

Maximizing COBRA Utilization

by Jeffrey Record

Bac Lieu is a small out-of-the-way province at the southern end of the Mekong Delta. It rarely makes the 6:30 news. When I was there in 1968-69 with the American advisory team serving as the Assistant Province Advisor for Psychological Operations, there were no North Vietnamese troops in the province. What Viet Cong strength there was consisted largely of part-time village and hamlet guerrillas armed mostly with single-shot vintage German Mausers. They concentrated primarily on blowing up bridges with uncanny accuracy and mining the few passable roads. They were experts at placing booby traps, and the ARVN soldiers obliged them by returning again and again to the same place, tripping the same wires with deadly consistency.

Americans believed there were about 3,000 full-time, hard-core Viet Cong in Bac Lieu, or one per cent of the total population. Arrayed against this scanty enemy presence were over 20,000 well-armed men: elements of the 21st ARVN Division, Regional Force companies, Popular Force companies, and the ubiquitous People's

Self Defense Force, a kind of local home guard. This vast military structure was supplemented by numerous Revolutionary Development Teams, the Provincial Police, the paramilitary Police Field Force, and the Provincial Reconnaissance Unit—an extortion and assassination team run directly by the CIA and composed mostly of criminals, deserters, and former Viet Cong.

On top of this overwhelming numerical superiority, the Vietnamese government possessed, as it does in every province in South Vietnam, complete control of the air through its American ally.

I arrived in Bac Lieu in August, 1968, and my first impressions were favorable. Both the Province Senior Advisor (the head of the American advisory team) and the Province Chief (the Vietnamese "governor" of the province) seemed acutely aware of the military and political dangers inherent in the indiscriminate use of firepower, particularly in such a heavily populated province like Bac Lieu. The Province Chief had refused to permit B-52 strikes, and the Province Senior Advisor had repeatedly denied U.S. Navy requests to shell the province from offshore. He had also forbidden

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