

To The Editor:

We, the undersigned, write as scholars and specialists most of whom have devoted much of their adult lives to study and work in South and East Asian affairs. Included in our number are most of this nation's small nucleus of specialists on Vietnam. Many of us have lived in Vietnam itself.

We feel compelled to write in response to what we consider the distortions of fact and the emotional allegations of a small but vociferous group of fellow university teachers regarding the war in Vietnam. We must first observe that those who have signed advertisements and petitions represent a very small proportion of all university professors. Further, the petition signers include disproportionately fewer scholars in the fields of government, international relations and Asian studies. To our knowledge, no acknowledged expert on Vietnam itself has signed the advertisements appearing in the New York Times protesting U.S. policy in Vietnam. A mere handful of scholars with Far East credentials identified themselves with these protests.

Quite apart from the merits of American policy - past or present - we believe the manner in which the petitions and many "teach-ins" have been presented is a discredit to those who would call themselves scholars. The Vietnamese war and its related political context are enormously complex. Even the most qualified experts disagree on important facts or the meaning of those facts. It is no surprise that they also disagree on alternative courses of action.

It serves no useful purpose, therefore, to engage in namecalling, distortion, emotionalism, and gross oversimplification. Many of our fellow scholars, no doubt eminently qualified in their own fields, are in our view guilty of unacademic behavior in their protests of Vietnam policy.

For the record, therefore, we feel compelled to make the following assertions of fact:

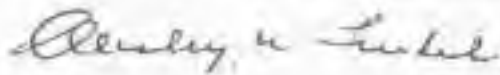
1. The Viet Cong initiated the present war in South Vietnam. They did so in gradual stages, beginning with assassination, terror, and bellicose propaganda. This was followed by sabotage, subversion, and small-scale guerilla attacks; in later stages, large-scale frontal assaults were employed. Only in the last stage did the U.S. government feel compelled to increase its military involvement substantially.
2. The Viet Cong is a Communist-led and Communist-controlled political movement. Its aim is to establish, by any available means, a Communist rule in South Vietnam.
3. It is false to compare the war now being fought in Vietnam with that which was fought by the French between 1946 and 1954. That was a colonial war, fought by Vietnamese of every variety of political complexions to achieve national independence. The Government of Vietnam since 1954 has been a truly Vietnamese national regime, and it is fighting now to maintain its independence. That it is not without faults goes without saying. This, however, is not the issue. Surely it is of some significance that not one prominent nationalist of all the thousands of such men in South Vietnam has defected to the Communists since 1954.

4. The People's Revolutionary Party, which leads the Viet Cong, is a segment of the Lao Dong (Communist) party of North Viet Nam. The Viet Cong itself was organized by the North Vietnamese, armed by the North Vietnamese, and trained by the North Vietnamese. This is not to deny the fact that many of its cadres were originally born in South Vietnam, and later trained or indoctrinated in the North. Nor is it to deny that thousands of South Vietnamese were persuaded or forced to join the Viet Cong in the South.
5. The Viet Cong have employed methods of terror, torture, and outright murder that, on a smaller scale, rival the atrocities of the Axis powers in World War II. Thousands of innocent people (including women and children) have been deliberately slaughtered by the Viet Cong as "examples" for the other South Vietnamese. Beheading and mutilation are not uncommon. For American academics to bemoan the "brutality" of the South Vietnamese response, without the slightest comment on the initiators of the brutality, is the epitome of bias.
6. The Communist regime in North Vietnam is among the harshest and most brutal in Asia. All opposition has been exterminated. The society is organized into cells of mutual surveillance. No free elections of any kind have been permitted. The living standards of the people are low even by Asian standards.
7. In contrast, the people of South Vietnam, until the stepped-up Viet Cong attack, were enjoying a far better living standard. Hunger was virtually eliminated. Industries were expanding. Schools, clinics, and social welfare services were proliferating rapidly. Between 1954 and 1961, there were four elections, conducted with varying degrees of freedom.
8. The Geneva Accords were broken first and repeatedly by the Communists, as documented by the records of the International Controls Commission.
9. The President has offered to hold unconditional peace talks with Hanoi and has been rejected repeatedly by Hanoi, Peking, and Moscow. The burden of proof is now on the Communists.
10. Communist conquest of South Vietnam would, in our view, lead inevitably to a deterioration of resolve throughout South and Southeast Asia. While the non-Communist states in the region are not likely to fall in actual geographical sequence (i.e., the "domino" theory), we believe these nations would eventually succumb politically and/or militarily to Chinese expansionism following an American withdrawal from Vietnam. We further believe that Chinese hegemony over Southeast Asia would be disastrous to American national interest and will severely compromise the capacity of Japan, the Philippines, India, and Pakistan to survive as independent nations.

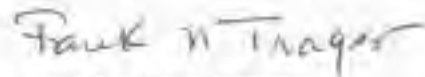
If there is any lesson that should have been learned by us since 1919, it is that collective security is the only effective means to deal with totalitarianism on the march. Our negotiations and agreements must not be "Munichs." Rather they must be backed by clear evidence of our determination to maintain the arrangements agreed to as the conditions for peace. Men who prize liberty are unwilling to settle for peace at any price. Nor does negotiation from weakness and without conditions serve to placate imperial ambitions. The surest guarantee of peace in Asia is what it has always been everywhere: recognition by all that our commitments to our allies will be honored. And we shall use the peace thus secured as Americans used it in postwar Europe, and as President Johnson has pledged to use it for Asia. The basis for a lasting settlement in Asia will be built as we create the conditions for freedom through social and economic programs no less than through military means.

(Please see the attached list of signers.)

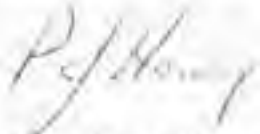
Organizational affiliations listed for identification purposes only



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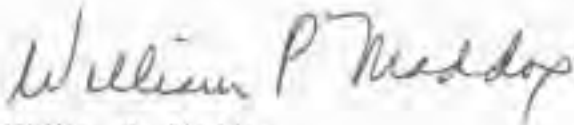
Dr. Frank N. Trager
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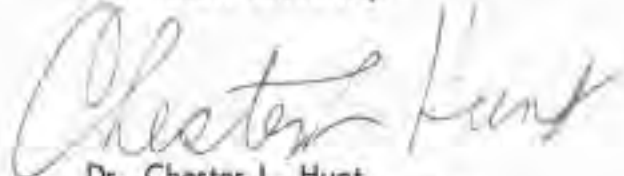
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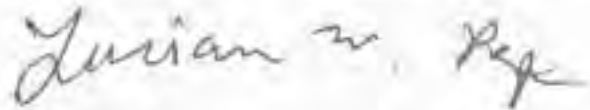
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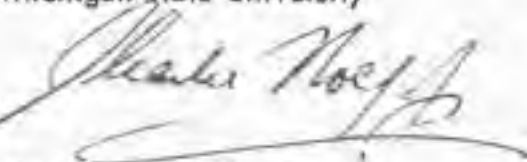
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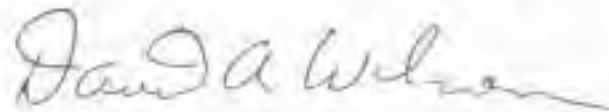
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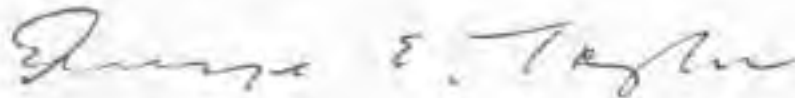
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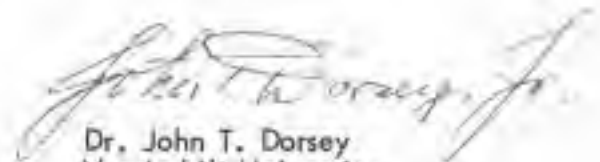
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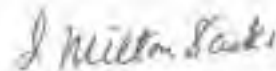
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