

## Schlesinger Calls For De-escalation

According to Theodore Schlesinger, Jr., the question of why we are in Vietnam is only of historical importance. The situation does exist though and cannot be denied or ignored. Our commitment is seen in the great number of troops involved in the war.

Although the Vietnamese story is a tragedy without villains the U. S. is deeply involved and should find a way out. Escalation in the war is rationalized by the theory that if the war is widened it will be shortened. Consequently, the war is not being ended, but extended.

Contrary to the popular belief that the war resulted from clear-cut aggression across the frontiers, evidence shows that the war began as an insurrection within South Vietnam which induced involvement from the north.

In Vietnam we are fighting one war while the Viet Cong are fighting another. Our attempts to control their guerrilla tactics are not very effective since we fight in such an open manner. The U. S. is attempting to demolish the political and institutional fabric which is essential for an independent South Vietnamese state.

The war is based on the idea that China is our real enemy. This theory is based on the idea that Hanoi receives direction from Peking, so that the war is Mao's war. By identification process the Viet Cong equals Hanoi and Hanoi equals Peking. Schlesinger doesn't think that China is really interested in becoming fully involved. In fact, he feels that a Communist Vietnam under Ho (or his successor) might be a better instrument of containment than a shaky Saigon regime. The reasoning behind this is that North Vietnam would probably be receiving Soviet aid now in order to resist Chinese pressure.

According to Schlesinger a middle way out of Vietnam is possible. To begin with we must cease expansion and Americanization of the war. The problem is political, not military. It is essential to hold the line in South Vietnam. We have already shown that we cannot be beaten unless we abruptly quit. Also, the military should create and stabilize secure areas where the South Vietnamese could establish social and institutional development. Next we should get the Saigon government to provide generous amnesty provisions and to abolish the torture of prisoners. Bombing should not be resumed in the North since the effect is limited. The progression of this is necessary to convince the North Vietnamese of our sincerity. Hanoi does have reason to mistrust the U. S. in negotiations since Ho has twice lost things in conference that he thought he had won in battle.

Schlesinger suggests that some of the enthusiasm used in pursuing the war be used in pursuing negotiations even further. The U. S. must revise certain terms which have been set which the Viet Cong will not possibly accept. The most important effort the U. S. can make is to aid with the rebuilding and updating of the political and institutional structures of South Vietnam. We have more to gain by de-escalation than extension.

Source: New York Times

## Attack Of '64 Analyzed

# Tonkin Incident Start Of U.S. Involvement

By Priscilla Barton

Although the United States has never officially declared war on North Vietnam the reasoning behind our military commitment lies in the Tonkin Gulf Resolution of 1964. This resolution is a result of the events which took place in early August of 1964. According to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, in a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, the United States' vessels, Maddox and Turner Joy, were deliberately attacked with atomic weapons and torpedos by the North Vietnamese in the Tonkin Bay. The ambiguity of this accusation and the legitimacy of the actions that followed are discussed in the following synopsis and reprint of the March 4, 1968 issue of the I. F. Stone Weekly.

After examining the transcripts of the August 4, 1964 hearings involving Defense Secretary McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and General Wheeler against the recent 1968 ones, in reference to the Tonkin Gulf incident, it is evident that there are grave discrepancies between them. It is also evident that McNamara did not reveal much of the information which he had on hand during the Tonkin Gulf incident, thus reflecting doubt concerning U. S. policy at this time. McNamara made very decisive statements about the incident in 1964 whereas it is now obvious that a great deal of ambiguity concerning the events actually existed. Three or four hours after the attack supposedly occurred the Maddox cabled the message: "No actual visual sightings by Maddox. Suggest complete evaluation before any further action." Corresponding to the question of legitimate engagement with the enemy is the fact that no damage whatsoever was suffered by either ship involved. With this in mind the question at large was posed to Secretary McNamara in a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on February 20 as to why such extensive retaliatory measures were taken against North Vietnam by the United States when the Tonkin incident occurred.

Chairman Fulbright: "Why did the U. S. consider it necessary to retaliate against North Vietnam in a manner so completely disproportionate to the offense? Why did we not protest to the International Control Commission as the North Vietnamese did on July 31, two days before the first incident, when Hanoi formally protested attack on its islands?"

## Marine Gives Inside View Into Horror Of Vietnam

(Ed. Note: The following is a letter to Senator J. William Fulbright printed in the Congressional Record of June 16, 1967.)

Dear Senator Fulbright:

I went to Vietnam a hard-charging Marine 2nd Lt., sure I had answered the plea of a victimized people. That belief lasted about two weeks. Instead of fighting the Communist aggressors I found that 90% of the time our military actions were directed against the people of South Vietnam. We are engaged in a war in Vietnam to pound a people into submission to a government that has little or no popular support.



Much has been written about the terror tactics used by the Viet Cong. The real terrorists in Vietnam are the Americans and their allies. I don't deny that some of the accusations against the VC are true but from my own experience the terror and havoc that we spread makes the VC look like a Girl Scout picnic.

Can you imagine what an isolated village looks like after it has been hit by over 500 750-pound bombs in a matter of seconds? Women, children, old men, cattle and every living thing is struck down without ever knowing from where their destruction originated. This particular village ceased to exist because it was in a VC dominated area. Intelligence reports said it might have been used as a North Vietnamese regiment headquarters. We never found any dead soldiers but as is the custom in VC controlled areas, all the dead were listed as VC killed in action.

I also saw thousands of pounds of rice dumped in rivers and otherwise destroyed because some small unit commander decided that there was too much rice in this particular village for the number of people living there, and therefore the surplus must be going to the VC. Here is some 2nd Lt. with a degree in Literature suddenly making himself an expert on Asian agriculture and family consumption patterns. These people had worked for months to bring in a rice harvest and their "defenders" had come along and destroyed it in a matter of minutes. They certainly aren't going to be thinking of us as saviors. This scene was repeated dozens of time during my tour.

I wanted to tell you that there are many, many of us in the military who oppose this war and appreciate your efforts to bring out the truth and get this thing stopped. We are not very vocal because it is all right for a military man to speak out in support of the war but to speak out in opposition would subject us to very serious repercussions. All three of my friends who went to Vietnam with me came away sharing my feelings.

At one time I thought I would make the military my career. But I could not live with myself if I stayed in the service of my own free will and was sent to Vietnam again to brutalize those poor people.

(name not published for obvious reasons)

Secretary McNamara: "Because the International Control Commission has a record of failure in investigating incidents of this kind . . ."

Senator Gore: ". . . The Administration was hasty, acted precipitately, inadvisably, unwisely, out of proportion to the provocation in launching 64 bombing attacks on North Vietnam out of a confused, uncertain situation on a murky night, which one of the sailors described as dark as the knob of hell; and particularly, five hours after the task force commander had cabled that he doubted there were attacks, and recommended that no further action be taken until it was thoroughly canvassed . . ."

Senator Pell: "I must say I agree with Senator Gore in that the retaliation seems large in proportion to the offense . . . It seemed to me that in these two attacks, one definite, and one quite possible, we suffered no damage. Therefore why did we feel we had to retaliate on the basis of almost infinity from the viewpoint of the damage we suffered?"

Sec. McNamara: "Well . . . the crime was not measured by the amount of damage done. It was measured by the violation of our right to navigate freely on the high seas."

Another aspect of the Tonkin Bay incident has been pursued by Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon. It is his contention that because the Maddox was on this occasion being utilized as a spyship that it could not claim the usual rights of a ship in international waters. As a result any attack on the ship by the North Vietnamese should have normally been more understandable than was demonstrated by the reaction of the United States government. Morse follows this reasoning up with proof that the hasty retaliation by the United States, in the form of The Tonkin Resolution, was a plan of action prior to the Maddox event. Evidently McNamara had urged, "a decisive commitment" in Vietnam several months earlier and The Tonkin Gulf Resolution had been written as a sequel to events already planned. In the Senate hearings of February 20 his statement was inserted by Senator Morse, it was contributed by an anonymous individual.

. . . this document is Top Secret and it is very tightly held because it is based in part on the tape recordings of conversation over the phone of the President, the Secretary of Defense, Admiral Sharp and others during the period when the critical decisions were being made . . .

After the first report of the attack there was a report there probably had not been an attack at all. But the President was to go on the air to address the nation about the retaliatory attacks that had already been planned, and after another flurry of confusion Admiral Sharp said there had been a real attack after all.

At this point the Secretary of Defense decided to advise the President that the attack on the Turner Joy was real and to order the retaliatory attacks and go ahead with the speech because it was getting very late for the address to the Nation, and, moreover, the retaliatory attack planes had been kept in a state of take-off readiness for the maximum time . . . Because later events all indicate that the second attack was at best a trick of false radar images.

I am sure if I signed this I would lose my job . . .

The Tonkin Gulf incident, upon the basis of which the resolution was so quickly obtained, was not a put-up job. But it was not the inexcusable and flagrant attack upon U. S. ships that it seemed to be, and that would have justified the Resolution and retaliation had there been so. It was a confused bungle which was used by the President to justify a general course of action . . . advised by the military . . .

From the above findings it is not surprising that Senator Morse states that the Secretary of Defense, the Administration, and the President owed much more in the way of facts to Congress and the American people. It is also Morse's feeling that the Tonkin Resolution would never have passed had the truth been made known.