

Letters

to the Editor of The Times

Expenditures for Peace

To the Editor:

In recent books and articles on the subject of Vietnam, Gen. Maxwell Taylor has made very clear that he supports vigorous prosecution of the war. General Taylor is the president of the Institute for Defense Analyses, and his feelings may be shared by many of the people there. However, some of us at that institution have a different view.

My own belief is that any political gains stemming from a military victory cannot possibly be offset by the enormous economic, intellectual and moral investment which we are continuing to place in this venture. The ultimate effect of the war will be to diminish our security rather than to bolster it. The only available course consistent with a rational defense policy is to withdraw with the greatest possible dispatch.

The foundation of our security is not our military power, but the strength and health of our society. By diverting so large a portion of our economic capabilities away from essential domestic projects, by involving so many of our intellectuals in military affairs and at the same time alienating others to the point where they will undertake no Government activity, and by replacing the traditional American atmosphere of hope and confidence with an attitude of fear and uncertainty, the Vietnamese war is very seriously eroding this foundation.

It would make us a stronger country to rebuild Watts than it would to bomb Hanoi. It would make us stronger to construct decent transportation on our East Coast than it would to destroy all the bridges in Vietnam. It would make us stronger to find ways to feed

those people in our own country who haven't enough to eat than it would to develop methods to defoliate the farmlands of North Vietnam.

The Institute for Defense Analyses was created by several universities to enable scientists and academicians to contribute directly to the problems of United States defense. Since that word "defense" has been stretched so far as to include our adventures in Southeast Asia, it would perhaps be appropriate to stretch it a bit in the other direction to include other activities which directly benefit the strength of our country.

With that understanding of the word, the most significant contribution an organization like I.D.A. could make to the defense of the United States might well be to direct a substantial portion of its technical and intellectual resources away from the area of military defense and toward some of the truly important problems currently facing us.

JAMES SIMONS
Permanent Member
Institute for Defense Analyses
Princeton, N. J., Oct. 25, 1967