

"CONCEPTS OF FOREIGN POLICY"

Ann Arbor, Mich.

Dear Sir: In "Concepts of Foreign Policy," (*worldview*, Feb. 1965), Professor Quincy Wright convincingly outlines an approach to international relations that encourages states with different social and political systems to coexist peacefully and to cooperate. Affirming the traditional international law principle that each nation is sovereign, he proposes as a means of relaxing world tensions a policy of "live and let live." If, as Mr. Dean Acheson asserts, current United States foreign policy seeks to preserve and to foster "an environment in which free societies may flourish and underdeveloped nations who want to work on their own development may find the means to do so," it is clear that Professor Wright counsels a less activist approach.

The continuing cold war conflict (combined with the frightening development of nuclear weapons) makes it imperative that world tensions be relaxed whenever possible. And a policy of respecting the autonomy of different socio-political systems does seem to contribute to world peace. But one wonders whether such a policy, strictly adhered to, is sufficient when a foreign government's conduct involves the abridgement of fundamental human rights. If the United States is to be faithful to its concept of personal dignity, it must—despite world tensions—deny that any nation has the right to infringe upon human rights and it should not be passive when confronted with situations like those in Nazi Germany or South Africa. Under traditional principles of international law, however, the treatment a government accords its own nationals is an internal or "domestic" matter, beyond the reach of international law.

It is true that a realization has developed in recent times that human rights are not solely a matter of national concern. The United Nations Charter explicitly recognizes that maintaining international peace and protecting human rights are interdependent goals and it imposes upon its members a clear legal obligation to promote increased protection of human rights. In Articles 55 and 56, members of the United Nations pledge themselves to promote a "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without discrimination as to race, sex, language, or religion." But, as Professor Wright himself mentions, the United Nations Charter is based upon the sovereign equality of its members, so there are no effective means by which these obligations can be enforced.

Until these obligations can be enforced, or until all United Nations members voluntarily comply with

them, it seems that free nations like our own have both a political and moral responsibility to encourage "an environment in which free societies may flourish ..." by affirmatively promoting the protection of human rights. To define the nature and the degree of affirmative action is indeed a difficult and delicate task, as the current impasse over United States policy in Vietnam proves, but to remain passive on the theory that each nation has the right to its own socio-political system is surely not a better alternative.

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"VIETNAM: THE TREACHEROUS DEMANDS"

New York, N. Y.

Dear Sir: Your editorial of March on the problem of making judgments about foreign policy in the context of the situation in Vietnam leaves out the most serious difficulties. If the issues could be adequately judged by technical experts, such experts would find some way of communicating their judgments to the makers of opinion; but, the points at which opinions diverge belong to a level of deeper issues on which no one is an expert in a decisive way. Those who are believed to be experts profoundly differ.

I am not at all impressed by the clergyman in Washington who said that he didn't know "a clergyman in the country whose views on Vietnam are worth a hoot." This may happen to be true of clergymen but the logic of that part of your editorial would suggest that the same criticism applies to editorial writers and senators and many others who express themselves on the subject.

The real difficulty is that the points at which opinions diverge are neither technical nor moral. They have to do with presuppositions about the present historical situation which guide both the technicians and the moralists when they come to make judgments about policy. There are students who know a great deal about the issues involved but they differ as much as George Kennan and Robert Strausz-Hupé. Here are some of the questions on this level: What are the dynamics within Communist nations after they have reached a certain stage of maturity, how important is the imposition of communism upon other nations among their priorities? What is the role of the military power in relation to the threat of communism? How relevant is it to draw analogies from the experience of Hitlerism in Europe (Munich) to the way in which we should deal with communism in Asia? What are the limits of American pow-