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An Open Letter to President Nixon

Great Barrington, Mass
October 1, 1969

9/16/69

Dear Mr. President:

We believe that American foreign policy should take into consideration this principle: our youth in the Armed Services should be ordered to risk their lives in combat under only two circumstances:

1. For strictly limited "police actions" to rescue American citizens endangered by riots or revolutions and then only for the purpose of evacuating such citizens promptly, not for the purpose of protecting American investments abroad; and,
2. In a formally declared war ^{or in response to attack on the United States} when there is no other practicable way of protecting the vital interests of the United States.

Therefore, in accordance with the Constitution of the United States, we hereby petition that you choose between two alternatives. Either;

- A. Win the war in Vietnam by all appropriate and necessary means generally accepted among nations at war including blockade of enemy ports and destruction of industrial facilities; or,
- B. Get our men out of Vietnam without further procrastination and delay.

We do not have access to the possibly secret information on which your decision must be based, but if there is any proof that Southeast Asia is vital to the defense of the United States, we do not know it. If it is vital to our defense, the time to vacillate about winning the war has long since passed.

Of one thing we are sure: there can be no reason satisfactory to us for sending American youth to war without the full support needed to win. We are convinced that General MacArthur was right: In war, there is no substitute for victory. Either fight to win, or get out quickly.

In the past year, one or another of the three of us have travelled extensively in North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and elsewhere. We have talked with hundreds of citizens of foreign nations. Our conclusion is that the United States "lost face" irretrievably when it chose a no-win policy in Vietnam. With reference to the Vietnam blunder in foreign policy, the United States no longer has any "face" to save. In any event, we do not believe that the life of even one American soldier should be sacrificed to "save face" for the Nation, much less to "save face" for the politicians temporarily in power.

In short, if the United States chooses not to win, as you apparently have chosen, Mr. President, no obligation to others should take priority over removing our armed forces from the danger zone. We shall, of course, have to protect our lines of withdrawal and ports of debarkation. That will require time, and during that time the individuals of South Vietnam who have risked their lives and fortunes in reliance on our earlier expressed intentions, now clearly abandoned, can decide whether to stay and try to hold some portion of their country or to save their own skins by seeking sanctuary abroad.

Especially disturbing to us is what seems to be a kind of "political credits" game described in The New York Times August 31, 1969. According to that report, datelined Washington, announcements of troop withdrawals are to be so timed as to cut the ground from under student demonstrations this fall and for "maximum political impact". If such is indeed the plan of procedure, we are unalterably opposed to such serving of partisan political ends at the cost of the lives of our men in Vietnam.

E. C. Harwood *William P. Harwood* *Harry P. Harwood*
 E. C. Harwood William P. Harwood Harry P. Harwood

TO INTERESTED AMERICAN CITIZENS: We are three brothers, ordinary citizens, determined to do all that we can to insure that our sons, grandsons, and nephews are treated as we should wish to be treated if we were in their place. We invite every citizen to join us in this petition.

How can readers of this message get action? - Bold

First, cut out this open letter and mail it to your Congressman with a brief letter telling him that you agree with it.

Second, send your contribution to help pay for inserting this message in every newspaper in the United States.

Whatever you send will be held in trust in the American Citizens' Fund for the purpose indicated. A proper accounting for all funds received will be available to the public. If you send currency, please fold it in a sheet of paper with your name and address for acknowledgment. If you send a check, your cancelled check will save the American Citizens' fund the cost of any other acknowledgment.

Foot note type

Mail your contribution to:

THE AMERICAN CITIZENS' FUND, P.O. Box 149, Great Barrington, Massachusetts 01230.

your friends &c
The costs incurred of additional mail