

Correspondence

Air War Vietnam

To the Editors: Frank Harvey is unquestionably right in noting that his original 1966 documentation on the air war struck responsive chords in diverse and unlikely places ("Air War Vietnam—1972," *Worldview*, March). For those of us who early opposed America's debacle in Indochina, his writing confirmed our suspicions about the antiseptic technologizing of human brutality. What strikes me as strange is that, after these six years in which the stupidity of the war has become evident to almost everyone, Mr. Harvey still seems incapable of bringing any explicit moral judgment to bear upon that horror.

In terms of the juices of human friendship, one can understand Mr. Harvey's saying that he would be glad to fly one of those aeronautical instruments of death if he "felt it would help [his] friends Jim Kasler and Robbie Reiser escape from their North Vietnamese prison camp." But hasn't the question of the war gone beyond simplistic compulsions of personal friendship? Especially in a journal such as *Worldview*, professedly devoted to bringing together moral judgment and public policy, it is disappointing that an article on such a major subject does not even attempt to bring ethical thinking to bear beyond the conventional militaristic lament that "war is hell."

James Franklin

Chicago, Ill.

Frank Harvey responds:

I certainly do not intend to try to justify the Vietnam war, Mr. Franklin. My moral judgment is that it's a lamentable, sickening thing. One hour in the Can Tho hospital would convince anyone of that.

As well, I suppose you might call it "simplistic" to say I'd fly a raid into the North if it would help liberate my friends Reiser and Kasler.

My article wasn't an attempt, however, either to make a moral

judgment or define public policy. It was, rather, an attempt to say what really appears to be going on there now. I feel that such an article deserves space in *Worldview* not because I write it but because almost nobody is satisfied just to present the facts. They always have to draw a moral. I have a notion that articles which let the reader draw his own moral are useful too.

I don't blame you for your stand. It's a logical one. But I repeat, I *would* fly that jet strike for those two guys. And I *do* respect the incredible fortitude of the VC. If this is simplistic I'm stuck with it.

Middle-Aged Zionism

To the Editors: Hillel Levine's valuable analysis of the dilemma posed for Israel by the immigration of Soviet Jews ("Soviet Jews and Middle-Aged Zionism," March) is marred by his apparent inability to see that "middle-aged Zionism" may indeed be a valid form of maturation. That is, why is it necessary, as Levine suggests, to think that real Zionism must mean some sort of "return" to Zionism's origins? One thinks of those Christians, who claim to be radicals, who insist that "true" Christianity involves some sort of re-pristination of the eschatological naiveté of the first century. We all realize that being "responsible" is not a very popular posture these days, but the leaders of Israel are no longer dealing in dreams or fantasies; theirs is the task of bringing order and sustaining strength to an actual sovereign state. In short, should the pressure not be on Soviet Jews to accept the responsibilities of Israeli statehood rather than upon the leaders of Israel to revert to the spirit of a highly romantic Zionist movement?

Surely Levine does a disservice to Israel in suggesting that Soviet Jews can turn back the clock.

S. R. Block

Los Angeles, Calif.

Hillel Levine responds:

Mr. Block seems to agree with my main point: that the absorption of Soviet Jews is posing some unusual problems, which has in part to do with the manner in which aspects of the Soviet Jewish experience are reminiscent of the Zionist past. As one who shares his concern for the welfare of Israel, I cannot help adding my personal feeling that this confrontation with the past and reconsideration of the issues it raises could have a beneficial effect on Israel at the present time.

I am not sure that I know what "a valid form of maturation" for society or a movement constitutes. But I do know that to reconsider the issues posed by early Zionism does *not* imply regressing to its origins—that is patently absurd. Rather, such reconsideration should make it possible for the values of the past to have impact on the society and its institutions in whatever stage they are of their development. There are a sufficient number of examples of societies where the loftiest values are flaunted by their institutions to make it quite unnecessary for me to belabor the point.

What appears to be a highly romantic and perhaps irresponsible effort at one moment may turn out to have been quite a practical and responsible solution. Zionism itself, as Mr. Block points out, was a "highly romantic movement" which has provided many practical solutions. For Israel to reassess its priorities at the present time may not prove to be unduly quixotic and certainly not irresponsible.

In Forthcoming Issues

GARRY WILLS

on Liberal Catholicism in Disarray

WILLIAM V. SHANNON

on JFK and the Revisionists

MARIO OJEDA GÓMEZ

on U.S. Investments in Latin America