

"VICTORY" AT BEN TRE

2/8/68

In the battle of Ben Tre (as reported in today's Daily) the American military has made clearer than ever the logic with which it conducts the war: ANY DESTRUCTION OF LIFE AND PROPERTY IS JUSTIFIED TO INSURE "VICTORY." In Ben Tre the Viet Cong rapidly occupied the city, isolated the American and ARVN forces, and contained them in their efforts to counter-attack. When their defeat became apparent the Americans "...decided that regardless of civilian casualties they must bomb and shell the...city of 35,000 to rout the Viet Cong forces." "Heavy guns were turned on the city's streets. Jet fighter-bombers carrying bombs, rockets, and napalm were ordered into the attack."

"Lt. Col. Dare of Chicago, commander of the U.S. Advisory Team 93, said 'we will never know for sure' the number of civilians who died. Many are buried permanently under the rubble." The Vietnamese province chief said that if the village environs are considered, Ben Tre was 85 percent destroyed."

This is the policy which we as Americans are asked, and which we ask of the rest of the world, to support with our lives. This obscene disregard for human life, this total paranoiac hatred and fear of communism which never hesitates to inflict its dictum "better dead than red" on an entire population. The lesson should be clear for all time: if this handful of men had surrendered or pulled out and awaited larger ground support which could of retaken the city, street by street, the population and city would not have been destroyed. But no, "surrender to the VC?" that would be ignominious self abasement; "pull back?", that would be to admit they had been out manoeuvred and out fought and a later ground attack would necessitate exposing sacred American lives to increased risk; no, it is far better, the Americans decided, to wipe out 85 percent of the city, to indiscriminately destroy a vast part of the population and thus, with minimum danger to American life, gain a total and immediate "VICTORY."

Stanford Anti-Draft Union