

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews

Mike Mansfield Papers

10-22-1966

Congressional Record - Vietnam and the UN

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "Congressional Record - Vietnam and the UN" (1966). *Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews*. 636.

https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches/636

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

Vietnam and the United Nations

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

OF

HON. MIKE MANSFIELD

OF MONTANA

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Saturday, October 22, 1966

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to insert in the RECORD an address that I delivered at the Johns Hopkins University.

There being no objection, the address was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

VIETNAM AND THE UNITED NATIONS

I have come here from two weeks of politics in Montana. Elections in my State usually involve a great deal of personal exchange with voters. This year was no exception. Although not running myself, I found the campaign as intensive as Montana is extensive. It carried me into confrontation with many, many Americans over a trail of thousands of miles. I had occasion to speak to Montanans on the range, in the high mountains, along the roads, at ranch and reservation, and in village, town, and city.

Political campaigning is not, as it might appear to be, an exhausting pursuit. On the contrary, at least to the politically sensitized, it is a kind of restorative. It reactivates the ability to differentiate between what is important and what is grossly over-rated in the public affairs of the nation. That essential perspective, may I say, is frequently distorted in the political prisms of Washington.

A campaign may be designed to inform the voter but it also informs the campaigner. It unfolds the deep disquiet as well as the hopes which move in the political substructure of the nation. Each election campaign, in short, is a rediscovery of the human side of American public life.

I meet with you fresh from an exposure to a cross-section of American sentiment as it exists in Montana, where the frost has long been on the pumpkin and the snows of winter have already begun to gather. I meet with you still strongly seized with what lies closest to the heart of the people of my State.

I have found in 25 years of public life that on fundamental matters, there is not much difference between a Montanan outlook and the national outlook. I assume, therefore, that the basic concerns of the people of Montana are your basic concerns, just as basic hopes are also probably similar. In short, I assume that what is most important in Montana is also likely to be most important here.

In that vein, I wish that I might say that the legislative record of the 89th Congress or some specific aspect of it is of fundamental interest to Americans at this time. As you know, the Senate and House dealt with a great range of public problems during the past two years. These problems, having accumulated over a long time, had arisen to challenge not only the stability of the nation's political and social structure but even the adequacy of the nation's physical environment.

In my judgment, a very substantial legislative base has now been laid for meeting these problems. The record of the 89th Congress is, indeed, extraordinary in scope. The cognomen, "Great Congress" may well be apt. In any event, as a participant, I should like to think so.

Yet, in all honesty, I cannot claim that the legislative achievements of these two years are a response to what is most basic in the concerns and hopes of the people of the nation. I regret to say that these

achievements, however significant, are obscured in the shadow which Viet Nam has cast over every aspect of the life of the nation.

The preoccupation of Americans remains Viet Nam and its implications. Every day, these implications grow more personal and direct for more youth and their families. The war is clearly the nexus of the national anxiety. And peace lies at the heart of the nation's hopes; peace—its honorable restoration at the earliest possible moment.

I know that you have heard a great deal of Viet Nam over many months. It is a subject from which you might welcome a measure of surcease. By the same token, I would prefer to consider some other less vexing question, perhaps even the outcome of the election. Yet I am impelled to return to this critical matter tonight.

As you may know, problems of foreign relations have concerned me for many years and, out of that concern, I have frequently addressed myself to the Vietnamese question. My views on the situation there are generally known and I do not intend to repeat them in detail here. Certainly, I have said time and again—in public statements as well as in the private councils of the government—that it does not matter much, at this late date, how we became involved in Viet Nam. The point is that we are involved, deeply involved, and we cannot and we will not withdraw in the absence of an honorable settlement of this question. Nevertheless, I believe (and I have so stated many times) that it would be to the benefit of all concerned if there could be an immediate contraction of the hostilities and, as soon as possible thereafter, their complete termination.

I have long been persuaded that the interests of the United States categorize us as a Pacific power but that those interests most certainly do not commend to us the role of Asian power. As a Pacific power rather than an Asian power (and the two are sometimes confused) it is, in my judgment, wholly in our national interest to remove American military installations and forces from the entire Southeast Asian mainland, as soon as that can be done—as soon as an honorable peace is assured.

May I say that that view accords with the President's proclaimed purpose in Viet Nam which is a settlement achieved by negotiations. At Manila, moreover, the pledge was made that there would be a withdrawal of American forces from Viet Nam within six months after a basis for peace is established. He has alluded, also, time and again, to the willingness of the United States to remove American bases not only from Viet Nam but from all of the Southeast Asian mainland.

This policy has not only been enunciated by the President; it has been reiterated by his subordinates. His Ambassador at the United Nations, for example, gave the President's policy its most comprehensive expression in the flexible proposals for a Vietnamese peace which he made at the opening of the current session of the General Assembly.

It has to be faced, however, that for all the words of peace, there is not only an absence of peace but no visible prospect for its restoration in the near future. Those with whom we are locked in this deadly struggle are either not persuaded of the honesty of our purpose in seeking the negotiation of an honorable peace or they are not interested in an honorable peace or they define an honorable peace in concepts so different from our own that, at this point, there is no basis for a reconciliation of positions.

May I add quickly that I assume that some such considerations are involved, because there are no certainties as to why proffers of negotiations have been rejected out of hand. The fact is that in the absence of a confrontation between all the participants—

the direct and indirect participants—in this conflict, we cannot understand precisely the reasons for the reluctance to open negotiations. Nor can we define the dimensions of the gap which must be bridged before peace can be re-established.

At this time, only one point is clear. Despite the President's obvious willingness to confer or to negotiate, we have found no such willingness on the part of North Viet Nam, the Southern National Liberation Front, China, or the Soviet Union. We have been unable to enter into an exchange with any participants direct or indirect in the Vietnamese war—except those already in substantial sympathy or agreement with us.

And so, the echo of the words of peace is the continued din of war. The conflict in Viet Nam has not only failed to contract; it has steadily expanded. The process has been relentless. All the while, the options have shrunk; the alternatives have grown fewer.

It is not yet clear what it will take to produce a flicker in the lamp of peace, much less what will be required to end the war. Until the conflict is ended, however, it cannot be dismissed from our awareness. It cannot be brushed aside in favor of more pleasant or tractable subjects. It cannot be relegated by indifference to the inconsequential.

Viet Nam is, as I have stated, at the core of the concerns and hopes of the people of the nation. It involves, in a very pertinent sense, the well-being of every living American and the future of the United States. It is interlaced with the interests of this nation in Asia and the Pacific and throughout the world.

The war is already a hideous human tragedy for all concerned. It has destroyed tens of thousands of lives and has put to the torch of utter devastation an incalculable quantity of useful resources. It has already swept away many of man's most constructive works in Viet Nam, north and south. It has brought this nation about 40,000 casualties to date. It has required rising expenditures of public funds, and their diversion from productive works. In fact, the current costs of the Vietnamese war are variously estimated as running between one and two billion dollars a month.

Even more disturbing, the seeds of a much larger tragedy are obviously implanted in the Vietnamese situation. That the conflict can be confined to Viet Nam is far from assured. Actually, it already extends into Laos and there is ever-present the possibility of its eruption into a war of regional, continental or world-wide dimensions.

The conflict in Viet Nam may end, of course, long before it matriculates into war with China or universal nuclear catastrophe. That is certainly the rational hope. Whether or not it is an attainable hope is another matter. In any event, the Vietnamese conflict now, today, already has the capacity to shake the precarious base of civilized human survival. That will continue to be the case until the war begins to yield to rational settlement.

Whatever else it is, therefore, the war in Viet Nam is a most urgent warning to all nations. It flashes a danger signal with respect to the adequacy of the present international instruments of peace. These instruments have not only failed to prevent a breakdown of peace in Viet Nam; they also appear incapable of restoring peace in any prompt and generally acceptable fashion.

It is high time, therefore, to note with emphasis that the structure of international order which has evolved during the past twenty years is, to say the least, dangerously haphazard. As it is now, each state has its own formula for safeguarding the security of its people. Each state tends to blend into that formula, in various combinations, a supply of unilateral military power and a participation in a variety of bilateral and regional defense arrangements. Each nation adds to this mixture its own

version of traditional diplomacy and modern variations thereon. Almost all nations complete the blend with a dash of the United Nations.

Of late, the role of the United Nations has become less and less pronounced. Indeed, with respect to Viet Nam the U.N. presence is scarcely discernible. It is true that the distinguished Secretary-General, U Thant, has taken public note of the conflict in Viet Nam and its dangers to the world. The Secretary-General is a man of peace and an exceptional diplomat. He has made clear that he is more than willing to place his dedication and his skills at the disposal of the disputants in Viet Nam. In his diplomatic role, he has outlined views which might provide at some point a basis for a settlement of the conflict and he has, otherwise, sought tactfully to engage the interest of various parties in a settlement.

With all due respect, however, the sincere efforts of the Secretary-General are hardly to be equated with bringing to bear on this situation the potentials of the United Nations. Viet Nam is, clearly, a breakdown in the peace within the meaning of the Charter. It contains, clearly, the threat of an expanding war. With these characteristics, it would appear that the conflict should long since have triggered the utilization of every resource of the United Nations in an effort to restore peace. Yet, I regret to say, that apart from the personal efforts of the Secretary-General, the U.N. reaction to Viet Nam has had something of the character of that of a disinterested, enervated or impotent on-looker. It is almost as though the conflict in Viet Nam were taking place not on the other side of this planet but rather on some other planet entirely.

It may be, of course, that the U.N. is unable to make a contribution to peace in Viet Nam. It may also be, however, that the failure to seek a contribution from the U.N. is a missing link in the restoration of peace in Viet Nam.

Whatever may be involved, the non-role of the United Nations in this situation ought not to go unnoticed. An embarrassed silence is no longer a sufficient response to the nation's needs or to the world's needs. Urgent though it is, there is more involved in these needs even than ending the war in Viet Nam. There is also at stake the prevention of a more monstrous conflict. There is also at stake the continued credibility and utility of what has heretofore been a fundamental instrument in the structure of world order.

In my judgment, it is high time to face up to the conspicuous absence of the U.N. from the Vietnamese dispute. We need to ask why, when the need for a peace-effort is maximal, the output of the U.N. is minimal. And we need, at the same time, to explore every possibility for the engagement of the organization in the effort to bring about a termination of the hostilities in Viet Nam.

The U.N. was an essential element, among others, in the Korean cease-fire. Why, then, its in consequence in the problem of Viet Nam? In this connection, it is manifest that there have been striking changes in the structure of the U.N. since the Korean conflict. Whatever their virtues, it may be that these changes inhibit the engagement of the organization in Viet Nam.

The most sweeping change, of course, is that the U.N. has become a General Assembly-oriented organization at the same time, that the membership has grown to over 120 states. It will be recalled that originally there were 51 united nations. Among the present members, there are, as there have been since the outset, states-infinitesimal and states-immense and, in between, all of the gradations.

There are enormous differences of significance among these states insofar as the practical problems of maintaining peace are

concerned. Yet, all 120 have equal access to available time in the General Assembly. All 120 have an equal share in the control of the purse. All 120 have an equal vote in decisions of the Assembly.

It is hardly an overstatement to note that the structure of the General Assembly is appallingly cumbersome. Nevertheless, the Assembly has made and it can continue to make important contributions of a long-range and peripheral nature to the strengthening of world peace. With all due respect, however, there is doubt that a body constituted as the General Assembly now is can play a significant—an executive—role in dealing with imminent threats of war or in the re-establishment of a peace that has broken down. In my judgment, the General Assembly is not competent for that purpose. In my judgment, it is delusive, at this time, to expect it to discharge functions of a kind which might be helpful in Viet Nam.

It is conceivable that alterations in the structure of the General Assembly might remedy its inadequacies for peace-keeping or peace-restoring purposes. Francis Pimpton, a former U.S. representative to the U.N. was right, perhaps, when he suggested that the organization was in need of "family planning." It might be that the use of a single spokesman for groups of small states would be helpful. It might be, too, that the clustering of smaller states into one vote on some power-projected formula would be helpful in insuring fiscal responsibility and a measure of realism in the significant political decisions of that body. I have no doubt that there are any number of technical changes which, given sufficient time, can be absorbed to great advantage into the structure of the General Assembly.

But in all frankness, I must say that insofar as Viet Nam is concerned, there is not a sufficient margin of time. Moreover, it is not at all certain that the kind of wholesale reconstitution of the General Assembly which would give it a peace-keeping function in Viet Nam and similar situations is either practical or desirable. As I have already noted, the General Assembly has other useful, long-range and peripheral functions of peace. Its value for those purposes should not be jeopardized by projecting it into situations for which it was not designed and for which it would have to be severely reshaped if it is to be effective.

It seems to me practical, therefore, to look elsewhere in the U.N. structure for a significant contribution to the restoration of peace in Viet Nam. The Charter clearly indicates that, veto or not, we should look first to the Security Council. It may be valid to assume that the Security Council is less useful as an instrument of peace-keeping when permanent powers are in disagreement. But it is not at all valid to assume that the Security Council is useless in those circumstances. That the Security Council may not be able to play the central role in questions of peace does not rule out its playing of any role.

Whatever differences may separate them with respect to Viet Nam, the permanent powers of the Security Council, I believe, have all expressed their grave concern with the situation and the urgent need to do something about it. That is an entirely adequate basis, it seems to me, on which to turn to the Council and seek from it a contribution to the restoration of peace in Viet Nam.

Let me make clear that miracles are not to be expected. All that can reasonably be asked is a wholehearted effort to do what can be done to further peace. The least that should be expected, or accepted, it seems to me, is a willingness on the part of the Council to confront the issue of Viet Nam and to confront it soon.

One cannot foresee, of course, what can be most helpfully done by the U.N. What ought to be clear at this point, however, is that doing nothing in the U. N. has not helped in Viet Nam. There are discernible lines of

possible U. N. contribution which, it would seem, warrant the fullest exploration.

One of these lines, for example, leads from the Security Council to the International Court. All of the combatants in Viet Nam have affirmed, I believe, the fundamental relevance of the Geneva Accords of 1954 as the basis for settlement of the conflict. Certainly, the United States has done so.

We need to know, authoritatively and impartially, what the requirements may be in current circumstances for the reassertion of the Geneva Accords as a legal basis for a restoration of peace. We need to know, too, what must be done sooner or later by all the parties directly or indirectly involved in the Vietnamese conflict to comply with the Geneva Accords and so establish conditions for a just and acceptable peace. In the circumstances, therefore, it might be useful for the Security Council to ask an advisory opinion of the International Court on these questions.

It would seem to me, too, that the Security Council is an appropriate setting for a cards-on-the-table consideration of the present positions of all the participants—direct or indirect—and those deeply interested in the conflict in Viet Nam. Certain of the states such as the United States, the Soviet Union and France are present as permanent members of the Council. The problem of participation of the others is not insurmountable in the light of the experiences in the Korean case. In that instance, it will be recalled, an invitation was issued to Peking—a non-member of the U.N.—to come to the Security Council and Peking did present its case and participate briefly in its discussions.

If a consideration of the question of Viet Nam before the Security Council is to have maximum utility, there needs to be present not only the Soviet Union, France, the United States and other Security Council members but also China and North Viet Nam and the National Liberation Front, as well as Saigon. In a confrontation of this kind, we may begin, at last, to understand whether it is distrust, disinclination, disdain, density, or whatever which has so far stood in the way of negotiations for an honorable settlement. We may begin, at last, to measure rather than guess the gap which must be bridged in the restoration of peace in Viet Nam.

To be sure, the prospects of a refusal of the invitation are obvious. To be sure, the prospects of a high decibel of propaganda and invective, if the invitations are accepted, are equally obvious. But these are risks which can readily be sustained when the stakes for all concerned are as high as they are in Viet Nam. Insofar as the United States is concerned, it is in the interest of this nation to welcome the confrontation. The open bar of world opinion is one before which we must never hesitate or fear to place this nation's policies.

The courses which I have indicated are illustrative of the possibilities of using the untapped resources of the United Nations to advance towards peace in Viet Nam. They may or may not be relevant at this time. A vigorous effort on the part of the U. N. may prove as futile as all other efforts to date, military and non-military, to terminate the conflict. But with the world enmeshed in the most dangerous international situation since Korea, we must seek by every avenue to facilitate the restoration of a just peace in Viet Nam. We owe that to the unfortunate people of that nation, to ourselves and to the world.