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Subcommittee on Library and Memorials

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VIETNAM

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, according to press reports, the Vietcong has offered 13 days of truce, spreading over Christmas, the New Year and Tet—the Asian lunar New Year. If accepted, there would be, presumably, a 3-day cease-fire at Christmas, a 3-day cease-fire at New Year, and a 7-day suspension of hostilities at Tet. The chances that the 13-day series of pauses will be long enough to achieve a plausible response are very, very, very remote.

The announcement came from the clandestine radio of the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam. This would seem to support the belief that the main factor to be considered in South Vietnam is not Hanoi but the National Liberation Front and the Vietcong of the South.
In line with his campaign promise, President Thieu has also indicated, apparently, that possibly later this month he would dispatch a letter to Hanoi intending to inaugurate negotiations between Saigon and North Vietnam. In my opinion, this is a foregone conclusion.

It would seem to me to be far more advisable for Saigon to dispatch a communication to the National Liberation Front for the purpose of acquainting it with the spirit of negotiations that might lead to a settlement in South Vietnam. If direct communication is not possible then, perhaps, a message might go by way of an intermediary such as Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia.

The National Liberation Front is the dominant force in South Vietnam, with a total of main forces and paramilitary forces numbering in excess of a quarter million men. This, of course, is exclusive of the some 50,000 North Vietnamese regulars, out of a total of 470,000 men in the North Vietnam Army, who are now located in South Vietnam.

In my opinion, there is very little, if anything, in the pattern of combat operations to indicate any weakening of the ability to keep Hanoi guessing. They are in no position to and cannot prevent the steady consolidation of American forces along the coast and in the major cities, but they still control the Mekong Delta as I will bring out later in my remarks.

It would be well to consider that our original intention in relation to South Viet­nam was to maintain its integrity and its independence. I would assume that in that area the people of South Vietnam would be included. Undoubtedly, the North Vietnamese have been hurt, and hurt badly, by our bombing raids against their territory, but it is evident by now that the three objectives of the bombing of the north, to wit, to restore the morale of the South Vietnamese people, to decrease the rate of infiltration, and to force Hanoi to the confer­ence table have not been successfully achieved. While the morale of the South Vietnamese may have been restored, the factor of the morale of the people of South Vietnam is another matter; insofar as infiltration from the north is concerned, it will continue at the rate of 6,500 to 7,000 a month; and as for bringing Hanoi to the conference table, the distance is, in my opinion, wider than ever. Therefore, it appears to me that in line with our original commitment, it would be well to consolidate and concent­rate in South Vietnam itself and for the Saigon Government to try to establish contact with the National Liberation Front. In this manner, all of the Viet­namese who live in South Vietnam will be represented. Perhaps among them­selves they can come up with a solution which would be preferable to our con­tinuous and fruitless appeals to Hanoi for negotiations and to the Soviet Union for a reconvening of the Geneva Confer­ence.

In relation to South Vietnam, the Mek­ong Delta, which is the stronghold of the NLF and the Vietcong, has hardly been touched. In that area lie 80 percent of the farmland and around 7 million or approximately one-half of the popula­tion of South Vietnam. The Vietcong has an extensive organization there and is, for many of the people who inhabit the area, the government they have ever known, trusted, or feared. The Mekong Delta has been the strong­hold of the government in Vietnam for 20 years, they know every aspect of guerri­llera warfare which can be used in that region. To the best of my knowledge, no area in Vietnam has been penetrated to this extent.

Every effort toward negotiations must continue to be made. Every avenue must be explored to the end that this war in Asia may well take years and require, as it has hereto­fore required, additional inputs of Amer­ican forces unless a solution is found to bring it to a conclusion.

We should not delude ourselves by such phrases as a “phase-down” of the level of American troops by 1969 to be matched by an increasing shift of responsibility to the South Vietnamese forces. Rather we should face up to the very strong possibility that the war in Vietnam may well take years and require, as it has hereto­fore required, additional inputs of Amer­ican forces unless a solution is found to bring it to a conclusion.

The President will be faced with the problem of the war here in the United States that our greatest danger from totalitarian­ism, whether from the right or the left, lies not on the border of our country but in the heart of the American people. The time within the coming year.

Mr. Aiken. I am sure that what the Senator from Montana has just said will be of great importance to the rest of the world as well.

His remarks are certainly worthy of consideration wherever listeners or read­ers may be found.

I was very much interested, in listen­ing to top flight officials on television and radio these past 3 or 4 days learn­ing that they have abandoned efforts to cover up the probable duration of the war, to which we have listened for the past 3 or 4 years.

I well remember when we were told that if only we would drop bombs on North Vietnam it would be a matter of possibly only a short time before the enemy would respond favorably and ask for a confer­ence. In fact, one retired Air Force gen­eral even intimated that it would be a matter of a few days. Others not so optimistic spoke in terms of weeks or a few months.

Now, however, General Westmoreland, with whom I con­sider this to be the voice of the majority anyone can be said, that we may hope for improvement and perhaps some de­escalation in 2 years.

I personally believe he is optimistic.

The Senator from Montana [Mr. Mans­field] has been referring to the situation in the deltas, which our administration has not talked about, apparently. What resources there may be on the delta or offshore, besides rice, I am unable to say, but it is apparent to all of us that the delta is an extremely important part of South Vietnam. South Vietnam is now run in Saigon officially by a government which was supported by 35 percent of the voters of South Vietnam and the U.S. Government. I would hardly call that a majority rule.

But what concerns me most, Mr. Presi­dent, is that while we are focusing atten­tion on Southeast Asia, we are really neglecting the situation here at home; I believe it is in the United States that our greatest danger from totalitarian­ism, whether from the right or the left, lies. I believe that the administration will face up to the situation, which they have not done so far. We hear rumors. We hear rumors of a very substantial in­crease in the number of our Armed Forces next year. So far as I know, they are merely rumors; but if there is such an increase, is this increase to be used in Asia? Is it to be used at election time in the United States, guarding the polls, as was done, theoretically at least, in Gary, Ind., this year?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. Mansfield. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed for 3 additional minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. Aiken. We all hear rumors that the administration may request some rather drastic rules and regulations, which go with the conduct of a major war here in the United States, some­time within the coming year. If they do,
it will be recognition of a very serious situation which exists here.

In this respect, Mr. President, on January 31, 1966, I spoke on this point. I said there was continuing attention to the situation which existed then, and expressed the hope, and actually the belief, that the administration would do something about it. I said this at that time:

From now on our No. 1 concern must be the preservation of the United States and its institutions.

A little later in this speech I said:

If President Johnson means business—and I believe he does—he will really believe it—

he will ask for the suspension of the General Tax Reduction Act of 2 years ago.

He will ask to have the loopholes of over-generous deductions and special tax privileges plugged.

And he will ask for such new taxes as may be necessary.

There is no sense in waiting until after election to recommend the inevitable.

Let us ask for more precious than votes.

He is now asking for a tax increase. I certainly believe that is necessary if we are to fully protect the economy of the United States. But even though Congress should grant the 10-percent tax rate increase which he asked for, it would only go a small way toward doing what he said he will do with the 10-percent tax increase.

It is hopelessly inadequate, the way things are going now, unless it is in conjunction with other distasteful measures such as price and wage controls—material allocations, and so on.

I ask unanimous consent to insert in the Record at this point the speech I made on the floor January 31, 1966.

There being no objection, the speech was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

[From the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Jan. 31, 1966]

THE RESUMPTION OF BOMBING IN VIETNAM

Mr. ARNOLD. Mr. President, the President Johnson has now directed a renewal and possible increase in the bombing of North Vietnam. Under both institutional and statutory powers vested in the Presidency he has authority to do so.

Even if 99 percent of the American people were opposed, he would still have this power.

Now that the decision has been made to engage in an expanded military action which may ultimately lead to a conflict of unprecedented and unlimited proportions, we must spare no effort to avoid defeat and to hold our losses to a minimum.

Although the Communist countries apparently gave little credence to the recent peace offensive of the President, there is no question in my mind that President Johnson did earnestly desire to put an end to the war in southeast Asia.

Any person in his position wants to be liked and rewarded as well as to earn a good spot in history.

He wants to be highly respected by the rest of the world, and, as President Eisenhower so ably demonstrated in 1953, the surest way to popular acclaim is through the restoration of peace.

President Eisenhower further enhanced his popularity and secured an enviable place in history by hounded Gen. MacArthur out of Korea.

In his opposition to sending large numbers of U.S. troops into Vietnam in an effort to stop our retreat, he played a part of their colonial empire for the French.
Besides increased taxation and conscription, we must be prepared to accept the concentration of powers and restrictions on our liberties which inevitably accompany any major war.

We must be prepared to accept these controls, as the number of former years, or is it?

Are we ready to accept a system of priorities—price controls and wage controls?

We are already in this system.

Are we preparing to control hoarding which may already be underway?

Are our shelters adequate to protect us from the next or in the loss of life at home?

We do not like to consider these things; yet they must be considered and acted upon unless the danger is far less than it now appears.

This time we cannot wait until catastrophe strikes.

So long as there is the slightest chance for peace, we should pursue it, even while preparing for the worst, but we must prepare.

Since the Vietnam war began to escalate rapidly, I have repeatedly tried to make clear my belief that a major war would have disastrous results for the United States and the world, or in the loss of personal liberty at home.

Although I have at all times recognized the responsibilities of the United States to the people of South Vietnam, I never for an instant regarded my vote for the concurrent resolution of August 1964 as a vote to give the President authority to wage war at will in southeast Asia.

I opposed as strongly as I could the start of a new war in North Vietnam.

And I believe the President has erred in taking new steps which may lead to a catastrophic world conflict.

It appears, however, that my voice has been ineffective and that the President has decided to take such steps.

The most that is left to me now is the hope that the President is right and that I have been wrong.

If, through the renewed action for which he assumes responsibility, the war can be brought to a quick and satisfactory ending, I will gladly admit the error of my judgment and be among the first to render him acclaim.

To this end, it is my purpose to support his request for higher taxes and for such controls over the American economy as may seem necessary to hold our losses to a minimum and to enhance the prospects for ultimate victory.

To divide our Nation in this time of crisis would be to court certain disaster.

Mr. AIKEN. I will say in explanation that my last sentence was this:

To divide our Nation in this time of crisis would be to court certain disaster.

Mr. President, I want to make it plain that I was referring to the economic situation and the security of our Nation and not in any way mean to imply that we should unanimously approve all the decisions, all the mistakes, which the administration might see fit to make or had made up to that time. But we are in a situation now where one cannot wish that Russia had been calling the shots for the purpose of putting us in as disadvantageous a position as possible.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I ask unanimous consent to proceed for 2 additional minutes.