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DANGERS OF INVOLVEMENT IN ASIA

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

[From the Great Falls Tribune, Sept. 28, 1969]

MAJORITY LEADER MANSFIELD WARNS UNITED STATES ABOUT FURTHER INVOLVEMENT IN ASIA

(By William D. James)

A warning Sen. Mike Mansfield made last week that a deeper U.S. involvement in Laos could develop into a Vietnam-style military entanglement is drawing national and international attention because of the accuracy of his grim predictions about the course of the Vietnam war.

The Senate Majority Leader based his warning about Laos on a trip he made to Southeast Asia in August at the request of President Nixon.

The trip was his sixth fact-finding trip to Southeast Asia in the last 16 years. He made such trips in 1953, 1954, 1955, 1962, 1965 and 1969.

Mansfield, who has investigated conditions in Asia at the request of Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon, has been consistent in warnings that the U.S. should avoid getting lured into the quicksand of Asiatic wars.

The Montana senator has been lauded frequently by national correspondents for analyzing Vietnam events accurately. Clayton Fritchey, nationally syndicated columnist, complimented Mansfield last year for being "the one man, who from the beginning, has been uncannily right about U.S. involvement in Vietnam."

After investigating conditions in Indochina in 1963, when the French were still fighting, Mansfield recommended that the U.S. should improve its Vietnam programs. Noting that we then were spending about \$25 million a year there, he stressed that the aim of our programs should be to build up the self-reliance of the people.

Mansfield has maintained consistently since 1953 that it would be better to have the Southeast Asians solve their own problems than to have U.S. military forces involved.

"The situation in Vietnam and in a larger sense in Indochina, is grim and discouraging," he reported after his 1954 visit. (On that trip, he also attended the conference of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in the Philippines at the request of President Eisenhower.)

"It would be misleading and futile," he said in his 1954 report, to tell the Senate or the people of the U.S. that conditions were other than grim and discouraging.

The need, he explained, "is not to bury the realities of this situation but to face them, however grim and discouraging they may be. If we do so, it is possible that the reversal which has been sustained in Indochina may yield experience which has application elsewhere in Asia."

"This experience could be useful in avoiding still other setbacks and damaging waste of untold millions of dollars of the resources of the citizens of the U.S.," he said.

Mansfield pointed out in 1954, when discussing the French defeat in Vietnam, that there had been a general tendency to "make the wish father to the thought and consistently and seriously underestimate the strength" of the forces fighting the French.

"If there was one overriding cause of the failure, however," he said, "it is to be found in the distorted emphasis given to the capacity of military measures alone to bring about an end to the Communist advance in Indochina."

He said it would be difficult to see what more the U.S. could have done to avert a Communist victory over the French, "short of some foolhardy commitment of American troops on the Asian mainland."

After a visit to Vietnam in 1955, Mansfield again accentuated the need to encourage the Vietnamese to take care of their own affairs.

"What is at stake is the active loyalty of the preponderance of the population of South Vietnam. That can be won and held only by a Vietnamese government which alone can understand and respond to the needs of the people."

Mansfield urged the U.S. to concentrate on helping with economic recovery and development programs. He said that ought to be done with a view to creating over a set period of time a self-sustaining Vietnam free from further direct reliance on U.S. assistance.

After visiting Vietnam in 1962, Mansfield expressed serious doubts about U.S. policies there. He said there were about 12,000 Americans there and that U.S. spending totaled hundreds of millions annually there.

"It would be a disservice to my country not to voice a deep concern over the trend of events, since my last visit," he said in his 1962 report.

It was seven years and \$2 billion of U.S. aid later but yet, substantially, the same difficulties remained if, indeed, they have not been compounded, he reported.

He expressed fears about having the U.S. intensify support of the Vietnamese armed forces.

"This intensification, however, inevitably has carried us to the start of the road which leads to the point at which conflict in Vietnam could become of greater concern and greater responsibility to the U.S. than it is to the government and people of South Vietnam," he said.

"In present circumstances," he cautioned, "pursuit of that course could involve an expenditure of American lives and resources on a scale which would bear little relationship to the interests of the U.S., or, indeed, to the interests of the people of Vietnam."

To avoid that course, he asserted, it should be clear to ourselves as well as to the Vietnamese where the primary responsibility was in this situation:

"It must rest, as it has rested, with the Vietnamese government and people."

Concerned with the possibility that the war would be converted into an American one, fought primarily with American lives, he said:

"It should be noted in all frankness that our own bureaucratic tendencies to act in uniform and enlarging patterns have resulted in an expansion of the U.S. commitment in some places to an extent which would appear to bear only the remotest relationship to what is essential or even desirable in terms of U.S. interests."

Mansfield and congressional colleagues who accompanied him on the 1962 trip agreed that the U.S. should make a thorough re-assessment of its security requirements.

Such security requirements could be met, they indicated, without any further extension of the U.S. commitment in Southeast Asia.

Pointing out the perils of having the U.S. assume too strong a role in Southeast Asian policies, Mansfield said in his 1962 report:

"It is doubtful that it is the best way in any Southeast Asian nation, if the responsibility for its independent survival were to come to rest more heavily with the U.S. than with indigenous leadership because of the failure or inadequacies of that leadership in meeting its own responsibilities to its people."

The Montana senator's warning of the "open-end danger of an expanding war" received worldwide attention following his 1965 trip to Southeast Asia.

Mansfield was pessimistic about chances for an early end of the war—in sharp contrast to optimistic views of top U.S. military and civilian officials.

"A rapid solution to the conflict in Vietnam is not in immediate prospect," he cautioned.

Mansfield contended that despite the great increase in American military commitment, it was doubtful, in view of the acceleration of Viet Cong efforts, that the Saigon government's position could be held without more U.S. forces.

He said there was no assurance as to what ultimate increase in U.S. military forces would be required.

The question, he said, was not one of applying increased U.S. pressure to a defined military situation, but rather of "pressing against a military situation which is, in effect, open-ended."

"How open is dependent on the extent to which North Vietnam and its supporters are willing and able to meet increased force by increased force," he said.

The senator's "open-ended" warning was discussed frequently in the next three years as the U.S. saw its military forces in Vietnam grow to 560,000 and fatalities go over the 30,000 mark.

At the conclusion of his trip in August, Mansfield recommended to President Nixon that the U.S. place an immediate ban on increases in U.S. personnel in Southeast Asia.

In a report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, of which he is one of the ranking members, Mansfield noted that our involvement in Laos already has cost hundreds

of millions of dollars and hundreds of lives.

The involvement in Laos carries the threat of even a deeper commitment by the U.S., he said.

Congressional colleagues of Mansfield, who regard him as their leading authority on Southeast Asia, have been impressed by the accuracy of his scholarly reports after each of his fact-finding trips. Many of his Senate friends say it is tragic that his advice and warnings were ignored.

The record shows clearly that Mansfield was correct in his grim warnings about the dangers of a growing U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

The senator now is warning the nation of what might develop if the U.S. makes the same mistakes in Laos it did in Vietnam.

OVERLY OPTIMISTIC VIETNAM QUOTATIONS

(EDITOR'S NOTE.—There have been so many optimistic statements about the Vietnam war that Philip Geyelin, editorial page editor of the Washington Post, made a collection of them. Geyelin published his list in the summer after Defense Secretary Laird declared, "We have certainly turned the corner in the war."

(Since then, he probably has added a comment by President Nixon. The President described the war as possibly "one of America's finest hours, because we took a difficult task and we succeeded.")

(We are reprinting the article to show the difference in views between the men quoted by Geyelin and those of Sen. Mike Mansfield appearing on this page.)

"We have never been in a better relative position."—General Westmoreland, April 10, 1968.

"We have reached an important point when the end begins to come into view. . . . The enemy has many problems: He is losing control of the scattered population under his influence. . . . He sees the strength of his forces steadily declining. . . . His monsoon offensives have been failures. He was dealt a mortal blow by the installation of a freely elected representative government. . . . the enemy's hopes are bankrupt."—General Westmoreland, Nov. 21, 1967.

"We are generally pleased. . . . we are very sure we are on the right track"—President Johnson, July 13, 1967.

"Progress has been made. . . . We have pushed the enemy farther and farther into the jungles. . . . We have succeeded in attaining our objectives,"—General Westmoreland, July 13, 1967.

"I expect the. . . war to achieve very sensational results in 1967."—Ambassador Lodge, Jan. 9, 1967.

"We are beginning to see some signs of success. . . . There is an erosion of (enemy) morale."—Secretary of State Rusk, Aug. 25, 1966.

"We have stopped losing the war."—Secretary of Defense McNamara, October, 1965.

"We are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves."—President Johnson, Oct. 21, 1964.

"The war in Vietnam is on the right track."—Ambassador Lodge, June 30, 1964.

"I think the number (of U.S. personnel) in Vietnam is not likely to increase substantially."—Secretary of Defense McNamara, May 14, 1964.

"The Vietnamese. . . themselves can handle this problem with their own effort."—Secretary of State Rusk, Feb. 24, 1964.

"The United States still hopes to withdraw its troops from South Vietnam by the end of 1965."—Secretary of Defense McNamara, Feb. 19, 1964.

"I am hopeful we can bring back additional. . . men. . . because I personally believe this is a war the Vietnamese must fight. "I don't believe we can take on that combat task for them."—Secretary of Defense McNamara, Feb. 3, 1964.

"Victory. . . is just months away, and the

reduction of American advisors can begin any time now . . . I can safely say the end of the war is in sight."—Gen. Paul D. Markins, commander of the Military Assistance Command in Saigon, Oct. 31, 1963.

"Secretary McNamara and Gen. (Maxwell) Taylor reported their judgment that the major part of the U.S. military task can be completed by the end of 1965 . . ."—White House statement, Oct. 2, 1963.

"I feel we shall achieve victory in 1964."—Tram Van Dong, South Vietnamese general, Oct. 1, 1963.

"South Vietnam is on its way to victory . . ."—Frederick E. Nolting, U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, June 12, 1963.

"The South Vietnamese themselves are fighting their own battle, fighting well."—Secretary of State Rusk, April, 1963.

"(The struggle) is turning an important corner."—Secretary of State Rusk, March 8, 1963.

"The corner has definitely been turned toward victory in South Vietnam."—Arthur Sylvester, Assistant Secretary of Defense, March 8, 1963.

"There are definitely encouraging elements . . . the ratio of casualties . . . indicates some turning in the situation."—Secretary of State Rusk, Feb. 1, 1963.

"The war in Vietnam is going well and will succeed."—Secretary McNamara, Jan. 31, 1963.

"The South Vietnamese should achieve victory in three years . . . I am confident the Vietnamese are going to win the war. (The Viet Cong) face inevitable defeat."—Adm. Harry D. Felt, U.S. Commander-in-Chief of Pacific Forces, Jan. 12, 1963.

"Every quantitative measurement shows we're winning the war . . . U.S. aid to Vietnam has reached a peak and will start to level off."—Secretary of Defense McNamara, 1962.

"The Communists now realize they can never conquer free Vietnam."—Gen. J. W. Daniel, official military aide to Vietnam, Jan. 8, 1961.

"The American aid program in Vietnam has proved an enormous success, one of the major victories of American policy . . ."—Gen. J. W. Daniel, official military aide to Vietnam, Sept. 7, 1959.
