

INFORMATION

Pres file

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Monday, May 27, 1968
4:15 p.m.

Mr. President:

Herewith some thoughts of
Gen. Taylor's which you may wish
to read before breakfast tomorrow
morning.

W. W. Rostow

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WWRostow:rlh

DECLASSIFIED
White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983
BY *AB*, NARA, DND 6-4-92

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NEJ 92-383

By ing, NARA, Date 8-12-93

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May 27, 1968

Mr. President:

May I submit a few afterthoughts to your Saturday luncheon meeting?

In the discussion of bringing our bombing back to the 20th parallel, it seemed to me that we became diverted by the argument that, based on reported truck killings, it is militarily preferable to concentrate our bombing on the southern end of the "funnel" rather than disperse it over all of North Viet-Nam. I do not happen to believe that this argument can be sustained but, at best, it is only marginally relevant to the basic issue at stake at this stage of the negotiations.

That issue is how long we should continue to submit to propaganda attacks in Paris while the enemy increases his acts of war in the South and we continue to restrain our acts of war in the North and U.S. casualties mount. I think that we have already demonstrated sufficient forbearance to satisfy those observers and critics who will ever be satisfied and it is time to return to the 20th parallel for two essential purposes: (1) to destroy the illusion of our adversaries that we are shackled by public opinion and internal constraints to the point that we have lost our freedom of action; and (2) to demonstrate to our own people who will otherwise soon become very restive, that we will not tolerate another Panmunjom which would be more humiliating this time than in 1951-53 if conducted to the piping of North Viet-Nam in the public exposure of Paris. Furthermore, the sooner we break the inhibiting chain that seems to be forming about us, the easier and less horrendous it will be to resume the full use of our primary persuader, the bombing of North Viet-Nam.

The lack of preparations of our public for the tough line which we must take is a hard fact with which we should deal at once. I would think that Vance's return should be openly related to our unhappiness over the unproductive nature of the first two weeks of talks and to our unwillingness to continue our unilateral restraints much longer. Abe Fortas made an excellent point about the opportunity which Paris offers as a forum for presenting our position on Viet-Nam to the world. But to exploit this opportunity requires organization and a full-time U.S. spokesman to present repeatedly all aspects of our policy and to correct the misapprehensions about it which are widely held in Europe and elsewhere. It is not just the events in Paris which need comment but the basic elements of our position such as the U.S. objectives in Southeast Asia, the U.S. strategy which we are pursuing to attain them, the meaning and consequences of the TET offensive, the contributions of South Viet-Nam to its own defense, our goals in the negotiations, etc. Harriman might continue to comment on the negotiations themselves and assign to Vance this background spokesman role which no one performs at present.

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But Paris is not the only available forum which needs persuasive spokesmen. George Ball in the United Nations should make at least a speech a week in support of our position. Every U.S. ambassador around the world should understand that a primary duty is to be the defender of our policy before the government to which he is accredited and the public of that country. We have never mobilized these overseas resources adequately in support of our case.

At home, you have indicated the actions you wish from your senior officials. But all unofficial help possible would, I am sure, be welcome. I do not know whether your attention has been called to the excellent pamphlet on negotiations (attached) prepared by Senator Douglas' Citizens Committee for Peace with Freedom in Viet-Nam. It should receive the widest possible distribution and use by the defenders of our case. (I like the expression in it that Ho Chi Minh thinks of negotiations as another weapons system.) A little encouragement to the distinguished authors of the pamphlet might get them on public platforms to repeat and emphasize their written views.

In summary, I recommend:

- a. Make warning sounds on Vance's return.
- b. Resume bombing to the 20th parallel shortly thereafter.
- c. Designate and energize qualified spokesmen to defend our case in Paris, United Nations and in every embassy abroad.
- d. Exploit the Douglas Committee and similar unofficial sources of support.
- e. In doing these things, establish beyond any doubt that we will not accept another Panmunjom; that if we are to stop the bombing of North Viet-Nam and all other acts of war, the enemy must concurrently stop the terror in the South and all other acts of war; that if the game is fight and talk, we will do both to the fullest of our capabilities.

M. D. T.

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Citizens Committee for
PEACE WITH FREEDOM
in Vietnam

1028 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20036
Telephone: Area Code 202-659-1145

A non-profit, non-partisan
organization founded in October 1967
by private citizens, including:

Harry S. Truman
33rd President of the United States

Dwight D. Eisenhower
34th President of the United States

Organizing Chairman:

Former Senator Paul H. Douglas.

Co-Chairmen:

General of the Army Omar N. Bradley.
Archbishop Robert E. Lucey.
George Meany.

Vice Chairman:

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Citizens Committee for
PEACE WITH FREEDOM
in Vietnam

For P.M. RELEASE
MAY 23 1968

NEGOTIATIONS

Hopes vs. Realities

Statement of the
Special Committee
on
Negotiations
of the
Citizens Committee
for
Peace with Freedom
in Vietnam

NEGOTIATIONS

Hopes vs. Realities

The United States welcomes negotiations which offer a hope of peace with freedom and honor in Vietnam—a responsible and durable settlement of this long, bloody and costly war. But negotiations are merely a beginning to an end. And the end is not yet in sight.

The road to a negotiated settlement of the war in Vietnam is likely to be long and hard. It is likely to twist and turn and take agonizing detours. And we face the unhappy prospect of continued bloodshed. A cease-fire is more likely to come at the end than at the beginning of a negotiating process.

* * *

We should not be discouraged or deceived by rhetoric. It is not **how** Hanoi says something; it is **what** it says . . . and, more importantly, does.

Negotiations will be desirable if they lead to a mutual de-escalation of the conflict, and if they advance the prospect of achieving our minimum objectives. They will be dangerous and undesirable if they develop into a long drawn-out sequence of meaningless round-table discussions while our fighting men continue to pay, under conditions made more difficult by our restraint, a high daily toll of death and disability.

Negotiations will be insupportable if Hanoi escalates its military effort in the face of the reduction in ours. We must bear in mind that once negotiations begin, the pressure

to continue them will be infinitely more insistent on us than on them. We are highly responsive to domestic and to world opinion; Hanoi is far less responsive to both.

Our objectives

Our minimum objectives in Vietnam must be kept clear and we must state them repeatedly and with precision. **We seek the independence of South Vietnam and its freedom from attack.** Nothing could be simpler or clearer than that.

- The South Vietnamese either freely choose their own government or they do not.
- The aggression from the North either ends or it does not.
- The North either takes over the South or it does not.

With this series of alternatives, it will not be difficult to know whether, and to what extent, we have succeeded or failed.

Negotiations and peace

There is no necessary equation between negotiations and peace. Negotiations are not an end in themselves—they are only a possible means to an end.

Regretfully, our Committee feels obliged to express its fear that many American citizens have been misled both by supporters and opponents of our commitment in Vietnam to place too high a value on negotiations or on "talks" in themselves—and to expect too much, too soon.

Americans think of negotiations as the road to peace but there is unmistakable evidence that Ho Chi Minh thinks of negotiations as another way to fight a war—in effect, as another weapons system. Too many Americans think the question is fight **or** negotiate. The enemy, on the other hand, has developed a consistent policy of fight **and** negotiate.

Hanoi's Deputy Chief of Staff, General Vinh, starkly enunciated this policy in a speech to the Fourth Congress of the Viet Cong: "We will take advantage of the opportunity of-

ferred by the negotiations to **step up** further our military attacks . . . the decisive factor lies on the battlefield. In fighting while negotiating, the side which fights more strongly will compel the adversary to accept its conditions."

Panmunjom experience

Our experience at Panmunjom is eloquent testimony to the enemy strategy and a clear warning to us. While Korean negotiations dragged on for two years*—with an enemy record of duplicity, deceit and deliberately abrogated agreements—we suffered 62,000 additional casualties with almost 13,000 dead. And there is yet no true peace in Korea.

We must adopt a realistic attitude toward negotiations, not allowing our hopes and our expectations to outrun harsh realities. Negotiations will be neither valuable nor productive unless both sides feel that it is in their interest to end the conflict and negotiate a settlement of the issues. Even though our military progress has been considerable, we cannot expect to win at the conference table what we have not won on the battlefield. Equally, we must avoid losing at the conference table what we have fought so hard, and given so much, to protect.

American resolution

The pattern of negotiations will reflect the military, economic and political strength of the opposing forces in Vietnam. One of the greatest of these strengths is resolution—the determination to see the struggle through

*The opening session of the truce negotiations was held on July 10, 1951. The Armistice was reached on July 27, 1953. The delegates held 159 plenary sessions, 26 at Kaesong and 133 at Panmunjom. The three subdelegations held 179 additional meetings. The Staff and Liaison officers met 427 times. In all, there were 765 meetings. The various sessions and meetings were recessed 20 times, once for 199 days. 966 hours were spent in face-to-face negotiations with the Communists. The transcript of the Armistice Conference comprises 3 bound volumes, each an inch and one-half thick. The records pertaining to the negotiations occupy 52 library boxes totaling 17 cubic feet.

—and the communication of that determination to the enemy. We would be foolish to expect Hanoi to negotiate a mutually satisfactory settlement of the war if their leaders believe that the resolution of the United States and South Vietnam is failing. Thus, one of the greatest threats to successful negotiations is that Hanoi may underestimate America's resolve.

We must unceasingly make it clear to Hanoi that we do not seek nor will we accept a camouflaged surrender which would inevitably result in the United States "writing off" Southeast Asia for the foreseeable future. We could survive such a catastrophe—but our citizenry should be clear that the whole security system, which has maintained peace and freedom for the past generation, would be eroded—if not destroyed—by an American retreat from our commitments in Southeast Asia. We would become a relatively isolated and less influential nation. Further, our withdrawal would be followed by the massacre of hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese who have stood by our side. On moral grounds alone, this cannot be permitted.

Time and cost

Our opponents view the conflict as being fought in two principal areas—time and cost. They appear convinced that both factors are now working in their favor.

Time: America appears impatient to end the war. We think in terms of weeks and months. Hanoi thinks in terms of years and decades.*

* Mao Tse-tung long ago gave us, in his own words, a capsule definition of our opponents' consistent strategy:

"Enemies advance, we retreat
"Enemies halt, we harass
"Enemies tire, we attack
"Enemies retreat, we pursue."

The tactics vary; the strategy remains the same.

John K. Fairbank, America's noted Asian scholar, has said: "Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues are committed to permanent revolutionary struggle rather than to an interlude of war terminated by formal peace."

Cost: We appear unwilling to pay the continuing costs of the conflict. They appear resigned to their proportionately far heavier costs, particularly in human casualties. To us an American life is above price; the enemy spends lives as we spend dollars.

In both areas—time and cost—impatience may indeed be our deadliest enemy.

If this is a reasonable analysis, the chances for productive negotiations would not appear to be substantial at this time. Hanoi's willingness to engage in genuine negotiations is, in our judgment, inversely related to their estimate of their military-political progress.

Nevertheless, America and its allies should painstakingly explore, for a reasonable time, every possible avenue of securing an honorable resolution of the conflict.

Peace with freedom

One cannot over-emphasize **what we do not seek** in Vietnam; we do not seek the surrender of North Vietnam or to destroy it or its people. Rather, we seek freedom for South Vietnam and an end of the aggression directed from the North. We fight for peace with freedom and honor.

We hope to see a South Vietnam which is free, united, independent, politically stable and economically expanding. To the degree that these longer range goals are attained, we will have achieved our "victory."

"Instant" victory is, unfortunately, not available to us on the battlefield or at the negotiating table. In both arenas, we must beware of impatience, disillusionment, and extremist and simplistic answers to complex problems. Particularly, if negotiations should break down, we must re-survey our position and weigh carefully the danger of over-reacting and of sharply escalating our military effort in search of a quick "victory." "Winning" in Vietnam at the expense of losing our position in the world would be a Pyrrhic triumph.

America has, by its unilateral de-escala-

tion of the conflict, demonstrated to the world our devotion to peace. It would now seem both prudent and warranted for us not to make further concessions without reciprocal, although not necessarily simultaneous, acts from the other side.

Mutual de-escalation is by definition a two-way street. Hanoi cannot always take and never give; always demand everything and never concede anything. A sequence of unilateral concessions by us, not reciprocated by Hanoi, would be the road to surrender.

Coalition government

We believe there is one thing that the United States should not do. We should not exert pressure on South Vietnam to accept a coalition government.

Any representation of the National Liberation Front in the political structure of South Vietnam should occur as a result of a free political choice expressed by the South Vietnamese themselves. All citizens of South Vietnam can fully participate in the democratic process—on a one man-one vote basis—without the foreign imposition of a coalition government. History is replete with examples of Communist takeovers of governments by obtaining control of key ministries such as defense, justice, police and propaganda. Indeed, Czechoslovakia is only now emerging from twenty years of totalitarianism following a "coalition government."

A world in conflict

Finally, America must not expect too much to flow from a resolution of the conflict in Vietnam. We live in a world of great antipathetic historical forces. There is no early prospect for world peace in the traditional sense. There is conflict in today's world and conflict—political, economic or even military—will unquestionably continue at various levels and in various places for the foreseeable future.

Our basic continuing objective is to hold such conflict within the bounds that permit

the survival of mankind. That is why we adhere to our generous and farsighted policy—the willingness to fight a limited conflict, with limited means, at limited risk for limited objectives.

The success or failure of that policy may well be decisive in shaping not only the destiny of South Vietnam and of Southeast Asia but of the entire world.

Signed:

Omar N. Bradley
Lucius D. Clay
James B. Conant
Paul H. Douglas
Roscoe Drummond
Dwight D. Eisenhower
John W. Hanes, Jr.

Mary P. Lord
Archbishop Lucey
Franz Michael
Ithiel de Sola Pool
Leverett Saltonstall
Henry P. Van Dusen
Eugene P. Wigner

May 1968

THE CITIZENS COMMITTEE

Who we are

Our committee is national and non-partisan—it is composed of Democrats, Republicans and Independents, and of "liberals," "moderates" and "conservatives" drawn from all sections and all sectors of our country.

We are incorporated as a non-profit organization. Membership is limited to those in private life. It is open to any private citizen who shares our views but it is not our purpose to solicit a mass membership or to circulate petitions or to sponsor or participate in rallies or demonstrations.

The Committee has no organizational affiliates. All members serve in their individual capacities.

What we stand for

We are a group of concerned citizens who seek peace *with* freedom in Vietnam.

We are opposed to surrender, however camouflaged. Yet nothing we advocate can be interpreted as unnecessarily risking a general war in Asia or a nuclear war in the world. We favor a sensible road between capitulation and the indiscriminate use of raw power.

We believe that, in this, we speak for the great "silent center" of American life, the understanding, independent and responsible men and women who have consistently opposed rewarding international aggressors from Adolph Hitler to Mao Tse-Tung. And we believe that the "silent center" should now be heard.

Our aim is to be the voice of those who support the bi-partisan fundamentals of American foreign policy—to speak for the "silent center."

How we operate

Our principal activity is educational, to in-

form the American people on the Vietnam situation in its many complex phases.

Finances

The Committee's activities are wholly financed by voluntary contributions from concerned citizens. We hope that you will want to help to make our work effective.

Contributions to the Committee are tax deductible.

Checks should be made out to "Committee For Peace with Freedom" and sent to: 1028 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20036.

Publications of the Committee:

1. "Peace With Freedom", policy statement of the Committee.
2. "How The Silent Center Will Seek Peace With Freedom", by Paul H. Douglas.
3. "The Nation's Editors Speak Up on Peace With Freedom and The Silent Center", Editorial reactions to the Committee.
4. "A Balance Sheet on Bombing", Statement of the Special Committee on Bombing Policy.
5. "The Nation's Press Discusses 'A Balance Sheet on Bombing'."
6. "Negotiations—Hopes vs. Realities", Statement of the Special Committee on Negotiations.