

A
FILE ~~SW~~ SUBJ.
DATE SUB-CAT.
10/69

The Choice In Vietnam

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:

Mrs. Oswald B. Lord.

Director:

Charles Tyroler II.

Deputy Director:

Abbott Washburn.

Treasurer:

Huntington Harris.

Citizens Committee for PEACE WITH FREEDOM in Vietnam

The Choice In Vietnam

An understandably war-weary and impatient United States faces a choice in Vietnam. The choice is between: (1) defeat, however camouflaged, and (2) ending the war in an orderly way that protects our own interests and preserves for the people of South Vietnam the right of self-determination—the right to decide their own future free of outside interference.

In our view, the devastating consequences of defeat dictate the course that America must follow. Further, our recent fact-finding survey in Vietnam has convinced us that an honorable solution can be reached.

The Folly of Wishful Thinking

Some Americans feel that the choice need not be made or that it can be delayed.

Some urge further, immediate, unilateral concessions on the part of the United States. But, as we have previously pointed out, a continuing series of unilateral concessions, unreciprocated by the enemy, is the road to defeat.

Some hope for a magic, overnight solution at Paris. But the negotiations at Paris will reflect the political, economic and military struggle in Vietnam and the state of public opinion in the United States—nothing more and nothing less. We would be foolish to expect Hanoi's leaders to make any real concessions so long as they believe that their demands will be met bit-by-bit without giving anything in return.

Finally, there are those who think that our intervention in Vietnam was a colossal error and that, consequently, we should now turn

our backs on our commitment and erase this bad dream from our consciousness. Even if one were to grant that our intervention was a mistake, the truth is that an act of bad judgment cannot be rectified by an act of bad faith.

The Illusion of Military Victory

There is still a sizeable group in the United States which pursues the illusion of military victory. What they forget is our limited objective in Vietnam. That objective was clearly defined by the late President Eisenhower in his last public statement for our Committee:

"We ask nothing for ourselves and insist upon nothing for South Vietnam except that it be free to chart its own future, no matter what course it may choose."

Our Committee has consistently opposed unnecessarily risking a general war in Asia or another World War. We favor a sensible road between capitulation and the indiscriminate use of raw power.

We do not seek a military victory in Vietnam; we seek to deny military victory to the enemy.

We do not seek to win the war; we seek to win the peace.

THE CHOICE IN VIETNAM

The real choice in Vietnam is between Defeat and Peace with Freedom.

The Road to Defeat

The road to defeat will be clearly marked. It will be marked by precipitous or premature withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam—withdrawal before the South Vietnamese are prepared to take over the job of protecting themselves from the Vietcong and the invaders from the North.

The Road to Peace with Freedom

This road is difficult and precarious but its markings are equally clear. It will be marked by a firm policy to substitute South Viet-

namese for United States troops as rapidly as possible but only on the basis of clearly apparent improvement in South Vietnamese capabilities. As President Eisenhower saw it: "We'd gradually withdraw as the South Vietnamese strengthened themselves sufficiently to carry on alone."*

The Consequences of Defeat

If the Road to Defeat is clearly marked, the consequences of defeat are unmistakable:

1. South Vietnam would be taken over by the Communist North. The large non-communist *majority* of the South Vietnamese people would be delivered to the small Communist *minority* and to the Communist invaders from the North. A blood bath would follow and, based on Hanoi's past performance, hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese who have fought at our side would be slaughtered.

2. America's word and leadership would be sharply devalued throughout the world. Every treaty that we have made, every agreement and commitment that we have entered into would be looked upon with suspicion by those countries who had counted on them.**

3. The development of freedom and democracy would be reversed in South East Asia, and slowed in Africa and even in Latin America. Peaceful methods of social and economic change would be downgraded and violent methods encouraged. A huge part of the world, with a rapidly expanding pop-

* Dwight D. Eisenhower in conversation with Abbott Washburn, Indio, California, Wednesday morning, 21 February 1968.

** Comment by General Omar N. Bradley: "We helped organize NATO in 1949 with the objective of deterring potential aggressors from starting a Third World War. Since then there has been no global war and it is safe to say that our NATO alliance was a contributing factor. If we are going to indicate now that we can no longer be depended upon to keep our commitments in Southeast Asia, our global deterrent may cease to exist. Keeping our word in Vietnam is a relatively small price to pay for insurance against a Third World War." 28 October 1969

ulation, would be increasingly vulnerable to Communist subversion and control.

4. The effectiveness of the new "wars of liberation" would be confirmed. An open invitation to expanded use of the guerrilla technique of conquest would be extended to those contemplating aggression against their neighbors and ideological competitors.

5. India, Japan, and even Australia would be under increasing pressure to develop nuclear weapons for their own protection. With the proliferation of those weapons, the risks of miscalculation would grow and the chances of a Third World War would increase.

6. Finally, there would be bitter recriminations here in the United States once the full significance of our defeat had been perceived. Voices of dissent from extremist groups would grow strident and there would be a violent shattering of American unity and self-confidence. A "new isolationism" would find fertile ground in a disillusioned and bitter people. Prejudice, scapegoat-seeking and intolerance would flourish. And the lesson of the success of violent guerrilla tactics to bring about change would not be lost upon those who seek to use violence to effect social change here at home.

* * *

In his last public statement on behalf of our Committee, General Eisenhower said:

"A camouflaged surrender would 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."

To our mind, the consequences of defeat would be so calamitous that America should and must choose the second alternative—the Road to Peace with Freedom.

THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM AND AT PARIS

A special nine member, bi-partisan, fact-finding Commission of our Committee* returned in late August from a trip to Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Manila, Pearl Harbor and Paris.

The Commission's findings were unanimous, as were its recommendations.

THE COMMISSION'S FINDINGS

The Turning Point at Tet

Since the Tet offensive in early 1968, the enemy has become weaker, our side stronger. This favorable trend is largely due to the enemy's huge losses in manpower, General Abrams' small unit spoiling tactics, and the military mobilization of the South Vietnamese people which is, relatively, one of the largest in modern times.

Progress is striking but precarious.

Since Tet 1968 the enemy has won no victory, taken and held no ground, sustained no major long-term engagement and has fallen back chiefly on hit-and-run tactics. He keeps the fight going in the South mainly by the infusion of troops from the North.

The South may have found its soul at Tet and in the mass graves of Hue. The enemy lost his bid for victory on the battlefield and the South's morale was clearly strengthened. The enemy had expected to find mass support in the cities of the South; he found none.

* The members of the special fact-finding commission were: Edmund A. Gullion, Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, and Former U.S. Ambassador to the Congo; John W. Hanes, Jr., Former Assistant Secretary of State, and Partner, Wertheim & Co.; Mrs. Oswald B. Lord, Former U.S. Representative on Human Rights Commission, United Nations; Russell T. Lund, President, Lund's Inc., and Chairman, Board of Trustees, Gustavus Adolphus College; Lester Malkerson, Chairman, Board of Regents, University of Minnesota; Rabbi Schulem Rubin; Charles J. Stephens, Graduate Student, University of California; Charles Tyroler, II, President, Quadri-Science, Inc.; and Abbott Washburn, President, Washburn, Stringer Associates, Inc.

Since Tet the South Vietnamese have expanded their ground, taken over the defense of more territory including an entire corps area, and have inflicted far greater casualties on the enemy than he has upon them. Peasants, including large numbers of refugees, are returning to the fields and villages, rice production is up, more local elections are being held, and defections to our side are increasing. Political progress and the development of democratic institutions are clear. A constitutional system is now functioning, however imperfectly, and despite unfavorable wartime conditions. We cannot and should not judge Vietnamese progress by our own standards. "Instant democracy" is not in the cards.

The Trend Is Favorable

Our Commission began its trip with a suspicion of statistics, official briefings and charts and figures. But trends are unmistakable. The overall trend is favorable. It is clearly in our direction. We saw it and we felt it.*

* Every available indicator underlines this favorable trend: American casualties have sharply decreased and are now at the lowest level of the past three years. Deserters from the enemy (the Chieu Hoi program) have sharply increased and are running at over the double the rate of last year and at the highest rate since the program began. The total South Vietnamese regular, Regional and Popular Forces has increased by more than one third in the past year. (The Regional and Popular Forces have increased at an even faster pace than the regular.) Additionally, the People Self-Defense Force—the equivalent of our American Revolution "Minutemen"—has grown to over 1.5 million from nearly zero less than two years ago. The number of hamlets controlled by the Vietcong has dropped by one half during the past year and the number controlled by friendly forces has increased by a third. There are more than ten times as many hamlets under South Vietnamese control as there are under the control of the Vietcong. Over 80% of the villages and almost 80% of the hamlets in Vietnam now have elected governments. The National Police force has increased 20% in the past year. Total acres of land under new "miracle" rice cultivation will more than triple this year. Domestic revenue collections are up over 50% since last year.

The Enemy's Initiative

Yet the enemy retains military initiative through use of his sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia and north of the DMZ. If he is willing to bleed himself at a fearful rate he can still, for short periods, sharply increase American casualties. Our commanders know this and we were tremendously impressed with their concern to spare American lives. America's present military leadership in Vietnam is of the highest order.

It seemed to us that Hanoi and General Giap have embraced a deliberate policy of playing upon American's natural reluctance to sustain human casualties in a far-off and not-too-well-understood conflict. To Hanoi human lives are merely chips in a poker game. As the late Ho Chi Minh once told the French: "You will kill ten of our men and we will kill one of yours. And in the end, it will be you who will tire of it."

We must be prepared for ups and downs in American casualties but, if we follow a measured policy of replacement, the peaks and valleys should both grow lower. The trend will be down. On the other hand, a too rapid rate of replacement would endanger the lives of our fighting men who remain behind.

A Policy of Gradual Dis-Engagement

The South Vietnamese must still rely for a considerable time upon United States troop lift, air and artillery support, staff assistance and reserves. Progress on the political and pacification front is gratifying but still vulnerable. It could be undermined if the Allied military posture is suddenly weakened.

In this situation timing is crucial, particularly with respect to the substitution of Vietnamese troops for Americans. *An American policy of gradual dis-engagement is feasible, provided the withdrawal of U.S. forces is closely geared to demonstrated improvement in South Vietnamese capabilities and is not forced prematurely by war-weary American public opinion.* Preparing for a long struggle is the best way to achieve short term results. Hanoi's leaders will never seri-

ously negotiate until they are convinced of our determination to stay the course.

The Need for Time

The South Vietnamese need time to tool up their army, their staff and support echelons, and to acquire confidence. To this must be added an extra margin of time to allow for mistakes, setbacks, and over-confidence. The South Vietnamese must be trained to use communications, air and artillery support and medical evacuation facilities. This will require *time* even after they assume the principal combat responsibility on the ground. One striking example may suffice: it takes 34 months to train a combat helicopter pilot.

"Vietnamization"

To our surprise, we found that the present comprehensive program for "Vietnamization" of the war is less than a year old. Very little of the program had been in operation six months earlier. We were particularly impressed by the rapid growth of security in the rural areas which has been achieved in large measure by the South Vietnamese themselves. The enlarged and newly equipped regional and popular forces are now shouldering a large share of the responsibility for protecting the rural population. In addition an enormous new militia force—the People's Self-Defense Force—has developed in the last eighteen months. It is composed of 1.5 million women and girls and older men and boys who are ineligible for military service. Two out of every three have already received elementary military training and 300,000 guns have been made available to these new forces. Progress in a brief period has been remarkable—clear testimony to the feasibility of "Vietnamizing" the struggle.

Vietnamese Confidence

To our further surprise we found the Vietnamese eager for the transfer of responsibility. The first U.S. troop withdrawals have actually stimulated them. They expect and do not object to further withdrawals. How-

ever, they see the whole process as *measured*, directly related to their own progress, and still involving at the end an important American residual logistical presence. Their new found confidence is a fragile thing. It could be shattered by an enemy assault if we leave them vulnerable. Their confidence could also be shattered if they came to believe that U.S. policy is one of abandonment rather than transfer of responsibility.

President Nixon's Three Criteria

President Nixon has made three stipulations for U.S. force reduction of which we consider South Vietnamese progress the cardinal one. As to the other two stipulations—reduction in the enemy's military activity and progress at Paris—a "lull" in the fighting ended while we were in Vietnam. We do not believe it prudent to rely on such "lulls".

As to the Paris peace talks, they have not failed but they have shown no progress of the kind the President stipulates. Next Thursday will be our 40th meeting in Paris with all representatives of the other side. Thus far, it has been largely a one-way street. We have given. They have taken.

The talks have, however, served to demonstrate that the enemy is unwilling to face the challenge of free elections, wants the United States to throw the Thieu government out, and then wants the United States itself to get out unconditionally after having installed a peace-at-any-price coalition government for the future convenience of Hanoi. There has seldom been a clearer case of a belligerent's trying to gain at the conference table and in the arena of public opinion what he has failed to win on the battlefield. Hanoi and the American people should heed the warning of Richard M. Nixon: "The Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese . . . cannot and should not count on American division to gain politically in the United States what they cannot gain militarily in Vietnam." *

* Richard M. Nixon, Manchester, New Hampshire, February 2, 1968.

A Possible Stand-Off

Thus, a kind of protracted stand-off may loom in Vietnam. However, if the President, and the American and South Vietnamese people stick by Mr. Nixon's three criteria, and if the South Vietnamese succeed in cementing a political consensus, we believe that the stand-off will be resolved in favor of peace with freedom—and that there is a good chance that the stand-off will not be as protracted as now appears. On the other hand, if we withdraw prematurely, the enemy can reverse the tide now running against him, complete his subjugation not only of Vietnam but of adjoining territory, and we will have lost more than 39,000 American lives in vain.

The Two Vietnam Wars

There are two Vietnam Wars: the one that is actually taking place and the one that is perceived at home on television and in the other communications media.

We had expected to see a devastated country with ruined cities, despoiled forests and bomb craters dotting the land. After traveling from east to west, north to south, and covering tens of thousands of square miles of territory, we found nothing of the kind. South Vietnam is today still a beautiful, lush country—damaged but not devastated. We were surprised by the relatively small amount of military activity and the large amount of quiet, normal day-to-day activities being conducted in virtually all of the country.

On reflection, we were able to reconcile this with what we had seen on television and seen and read in the other media. Obviously, it is not news to show and write about normal happenings and normal places. It is the unusual incident—the dramatic, violent event—that makes for news, and, presumably, watcher, reader and listener interest. Here at home, we need—but we certainly do not receive—a balanced presentation of the actual situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION

1. That the substitution of Vietnamese for United States troops take place primarily on the basis of demonstrated improvement in South Vietnamese capabilities; the American policy should be: "look before cutting"—not "cut and run."

2. That no timetable for withdrawals be proclaimed and that any schedule developed for planning purposes be flexible.

3. That President Nixon establish an extraordinary Commission to assess the progress of South Vietnam's armed forces; and that this Commission inquire into whether "Vietnamization" can develop at a more rapid rate of modernization and activation than was laid down in schedules adopted before "Vietnamization" became a by-word linked with U.S. force reductions.

4. That American editors and correspondents and the U.S. Information Agency give increasing coverage to ARVN sacrifices, progress, and capabilities. They should also direct considerable and unremitting attention to the atrocities committed by the enemy.*

5. That the United States urge that the Vietnamese government broaden its base among non-Communist elements of the population and that it seek new support in the countryside. The objective should be a government which can not only prosecute the war but which can also face up to the enemy in the stand-off which will follow United States force reductions—a government in Saigon which can speak more au-

* Granted it is virtually impossible to record on live film the disembowelments and tortures before violent death that usually take place in secluded places in the dark of night. But it is possible to record in photographs and with the printed and spoken word the clear evidence of Hanoi's deliberate policy of terrorism. In this war, we have consistently put our worst foot forward. We show the destructive capacity of our own weapons and the sufferings and deaths of our fighting men—we devote little if any attention to the sufferings of our allies caused by the other side; nor have we depicted adequately the inhuman practices of the enemy.

thetically in peace negotiations. Such a broadening should not, however, prefigure the kind of peace-at-any-price coalition that Hanoi wants to see imposed without elections.

6. That the American people should recognize the political benefit which can accrue from the proposed new, and long-overdue, land reform program and give appropriate assistance. Economists have long been prone to underestimate the impetus provided by granting title to those who work the land. Further, Vietnam's principal crop, rice, is particularly suited to small plot cultivation.

7. That the United States and South Vietnam should stand firm at Paris:

- a. For free elections.
- b. Against an imposed coalition government, and for whatever solution the South Vietnamese choose for themselves.
- c. For reciprocal troop withdrawals.

8. That the United States expedite the equipment of Laotian forces; and that our stand on the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces apply to Laos and Cambodia as well as to Vietnam. We must seek an agreement with Hanoi not only about Vietnam but about contiguous areas in South East Asia.

DEMONSTRATIONS AND DEMANDS

Earlier this month large youth demonstrations, joined by other members of a war-weary public, demanded U.S. withdrawal at a specific early date—well before the South Vietnamese could take over. Other Americans were proposing a unilateral standstill cease-fire.

The Price of an Abrupt Pull-Out

To pull out abruptly would throw away a fast improving chance for the majority of the South Vietnamese to live their lives as

they wish to do, free of the domination of Hanoi, ready, willing and able to defend themselves. It would nullify negotiations, represent an American sell-out, and encourage the victors to try for "one, two, three more Vietnams".*

The Dangers of A Unilateral Standstill Cease-Fire

The unilateral standstill cease-fire proposal is more subtle and may appeal to some as a way to test enemy intentions, but we believe that:

- a) Nothing in the record indicates that the enemy would respond affirmatively to unilateral action or honor an agreement even if he entered into one.
- b) The enemy can only keep his disjointed apparatus intact by continuing hit-and-run attacks on towns and villages and laying the groundwork for future large-scale actions.
- c) It would be a windfall for the enemy, putting him into *de facto* possession of positions he now occupies only fitfully and by terror.

THE SILENT CENTER

From the inception of our Committee, we have tried to speak for the "Silent Center"—the moderate, understanding independent and responsible men and women who have consistently opposed rewarding international aggressors from Adolf Hitler to Mao Tse-Tung. When we organized in October 1967 we believed that "the Silent Center" represented a majority of the American people. We believe that it still does. It may not seem so today as reflected in the communications media, but that is because "the Silent Center" has become even more silent. It is unhappy about the war—it wants an end to the war—but it does not want to buy an end to hostilities at the price of defeat, dishonor and of peace with freedom here and abroad.

* Che Guevara

The American People Will Rally

If the President of the United States follows the Road to Peace with Freedom—and we have every reason to believe that he will—and if he speaks out frankly, simply and fully on the consequences of defeat, a substantial majority of the American people will rally behind him. Many may do so with reluctance and misgivings but they *will* rally with the sure instinct of Americans for the path of freedom and honor and the long range security of the United States.

On Vietnam, we are in a desperate race between the natural impatience of the American people and their education to the true situation. In this task of education, the President and his Administration bear a heavy responsibility which has not been adequately met.

The Pendulum of Opinion

Attitudes on foreign policy are not dissimilar to those on stock prices. The pendulum swings violently from unreal optimism to unwarranted pessimism. For some years the American people were subjected to a barrage of optimistic projections and prophecies concerning Vietnam. Now the pendulum has swung to the other extreme. It is ironical that at the very time when the prospect for peace with freedom is rising in Vietnam, confidence in a successful outcome is at its lowest ebb here at home.

Hanoi's Chance for Victory

Hanoi is fighting on three battlefronts—in Vietnam, in Paris, and in American public opinion. The enemy's only remaining chance for total victory lies here in the United States—in the pressures of American public opinion.

October 29, 1969

THE CITIZENS COMMITTEE

Our committee is national and non-partisan.

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.

Our 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.
7. "The Nation's Press Discusses 'Negotiations: Hopes vs. Realities'."
8. "The Struggle For Peace With Freedom", testimony before the Republican Platform Committee.
9. "The Road to Peace With Freedom", testimony before the Democratic Platform Committee.
10. "The Choice In Vietnam".