REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT ON VIETNAM, DELIVERED TO NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO AUDIENCES FROM THE WHITE HOUSE

[From the Office of the White House Press Secretary, November 3, 1969]

Good evening, my fellow Americans:

Tonight I want to talk to you on a subject of deep concern to all Americans and to many people in all parts of the world—the war in Vietnam.

I believe that one of the reasons for the deep division about Vietnam is that many Americans have lost confidence in what their government has told them about our policy. The American people cannot and should not be asked to support a policy which involves the overriding issues of war and peace unless they know the truth about that policy.

Tonight, therefore, I would like to answer some of the questions that I know are on the minds of many of you listening to me.

How and why did America get involved in Vietnam in the first place?

How has this Administration changed the policy of the previous Administration?

What has really happened in the negotiations in Paris and on the battlefront in Vietnam?

What choices do we have if we are to end the war?

What are the prospects for peace?

Let me begin by describing the situation I found when I was inaugurated on January 20.

The war had been going on for four years.

31,000 Americans had been killed in action.

The training program for the South Vietnamese was behind schedule.

540,000 Americans were in Vietnam with no plans to reduce the number.

No progress had been made at the negotiations in Paris and the United States had not put forth a comprehensive peace proposal.

The war was causing deep division at home and criticism from many of our friends as well as our enemies abroad.

In view of these circumstances there were some who urged I end the war at once by ordering the immediate withdrawal of all American forces.

From a political standpoint this would have been a popular and easy course to follow. After all, we became involved in the war while my predecessor was in office. I could blame the defeat which would be the result of my action on him and come out as the peacemaker. Some put it quite bluntly: This was the only way to avoid allowing Johnson's war to become Nixon's war.

But I had a greater obligation than to think only of the years of my Administration and the next election. I had to think of the effect of my decision on the next generation and on the future of peace and freedom in America and in the world.

Let us all understand that the question before us is not whether some Americans are for peace and some Americans are against peace. The question at issue is not whether Johnson's war becomes Nixon's war.

The great question is: How can we win America's peace?

Let us turn now to the fundamental issue. Why and how did the United States become involved in Vietnam in the first place?

Fifteen years ago North Vietnam, with the logistical support of Communist China and the Soviet Union, launched a campaign to impose a Communist government on South Vietnam by instigating and supporting a revolution.

In response to the request of the government of South Vietnam, President Eisenhower sent economic aid and military equipment to assist the people of South Vietnam in their efforts to prevent a Communist takeover. Seven years ago, President Kennedy sent 16,000 military personnel to Vietnam as combat advisors. Four years ago, President Johnson sent American combat forces to South Vietnam.

Now, many believe that President Johnson's decision to send American combat forces to South Vietnam was wrong. And many others—I among them—have been strongly critical of the way the war has been conducted.

But the question facing us today is—now that we are in the war, what is the best way to end it?

In Jauuary I could only conclude that the precipitate withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam would be a disaster not only for South Vietnam but for the United States and for the cause of peace.

For the South Vietuamese, our precipitate withdrawal would inevitably allow the Communists to repeat the massacres which followed their takeover in the North 15 years before.

They then murdered more than 50,000 people and hundreds of thousands more died in slave labor camps.

We saw a prelude of what would happen in South Vietnam when the Communists entered the City of Hue last year. During their brief rule, there was a bloody reign of terror in which 3,000 civilians were clubbed, shot to death, and buried in mass graves.

With the sudden collapse of our support, these atrocities of Hue would become the nightmare of the entire nation—and particularly for the million aud a half Catholic refugees who fled to South Vietnam when the Communists took over iu the North.

For the United States, this first defeat in our nation's history would result in a collapse of confidence in American leadership, not only in Asia but throughout the world.

Three American Presidents have recognized the great stakes involved in Vietnam and understood what had to be done.

In 1963, President Kennedy, with his characterististic eloquence and clarity, said, "We want to see a stable government there carrying on the struggle to maintain its national independence. We believe strongly in that. We're not going to withdraw from that effort. In my opinion for us to withdraw from that effort would mean a collapse not only of South Vietnam, but Southeast Asia, so we're going to stay there."

President Eisenhower and President Johnson expressed the same conclusion during their terms of office.

For the future of peace, precipitate withdrawal would thus be a disaster of immense magnitude.

A nation cannot remain great if it betrays its allies and lets down its friends.

Our defeat and humiliation in South Vietnam would without question promote recklessness in the councils of those great powers who have not yet abandoned their goals of world conquest.

This would spark violence wherever our commitments help maintain peace—in the Middle East, in Berlin, eventually even in the Western Hemisphere.

Ultimately, this would cost more lives.

It would not bring peace but more war.

For these reasons, I rejected the recommendation that I should end the war by immediately withdrawing all our forces. I chose instead to change American policy on both the negotiating front and the battlefront.

In order to end a war fought on many fronts, I initiated a pursuit for peace on many fronts.

In a television speech on May 14, in a speech before the United Nations, aud on a number of other occasions I set forth our peace proposals in great detail.

We have offered the complete withdrawal of all outside forces within one year.

We have proposed a cease-fire under international supervision.

We have offered free elections under international supervision with the Commnnists participating in the organization and conduct of the elections as an organized political force. The Saigon Government has pledged to accept the result of the elections.

We have not put forth our proposals on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. We have indicated that we are willing to discuss the proposals that have been put forth by the other side. We have declared that anything is negotiable except the right of the people of South Vietnam to determine their own future. At the Paris peace conference, Ambassador Lodge has demonstrated our flexibility and good faith in 40 public meetings.

Hanoi has refused even to discuss our proposals. They demand our unconditional acceptance of their terms, which are that we withdraw all American forces immediately and unconditionally and that we overthrow the government of South Vietnam as we leave.

We have not limited our peace initiatives to public forums and public statements. I recognized, in January, that a long and bitter war like this usually cannot be settled in a public forum. That is why in addition to the public statements and negotiations I have explored every possible private avenue that might lead to a settlement.

Tonight I am taking the unprecedented step of disclosing to you some of our other initiatives for peace—initiatives we undertook privately and secretly because we thougbt that we thereby might open a door which publicly would be closed.

I did not wait for my inauguration to begin my quest for peace.

Soon after my election through an individual who is directly in contact on a personal basis with the leaders of North Vietnam I made two private offers for a rapid, comprehensive settlement. Hanoi's replies called in effect for our surrender before negotiations.

Since the Soviet Union furnishes most of the military equipment for North Vietnam, Secretary of State Rogers, my Assistant for National Security Affairs, Dr. Kissinger, Ambassador Lodge, and I, personally, have met on a number of occasions with representatives of the Soviet Government to enlist their assistance in getting meaningful negotiations started. In addition we have had extended discussions directed toward that same end with representatives of other governments which have diplomatic relations with North Vietnam. None of these initiatives have to date produced results.

In mid-July, I became convinced that it was necessary to make a major move to break the deadlock in Paris talks. I spoke directly in this office, where I am now sitting, with an individual who had known Ho Chi Minh on a personal basis for 25 years. Through him I sent a letter to Ho Chi Minh.

I did this outside of the usual diplomatic channels with the hope that with the necessity of making statements for propaganda removed, there might be constructive progress toward bringing the war to an end. Let me read from that letter:

"Dear Mr. President:

"I realize that it is difficult to communicate meaningfully across the gulf of four years of war. But precisely because of this gulf, I wanted to take this opportunity to reaffirm in all solemnity my desire to work for a just peace. I deeply believe that the war in Vietnam has gone on too long and delay in bringing it to an end can benefit no one—least of all the people of Vietnam.

"The time has come to move forward at the conference table toward an early resolution of tbis tragic war. You will find us forthcoming and open-minded in a common effort to bring the blessing of peace to the brave people of Vietnam. Let history record that at this critical juncture, both sides turned their face toward peace rather than toward conflict and war."

I received Ho Chi Minh's reply on August 30, tbree days before his death. It simply reiterated the public position North Vietnam had taken in the Paris talks and flatly rejected my initiative.

The full text of both letters is being released to the press.

In addition to the public meeting I referred to, Ambassador Lodge has met with Vietnam's chief negotiator in Paris in 11 private meetings.

We have taken other significant initiatives which must remain secret to keep open some channels of communication which may still prove to be productive.

But the effect of all the public, private and secret negotiations which have been undertaken since the bombing halt a year ago and since this Administration came into office on January 20, can be summed up in one sentence—

No progress whatever has been made except agreement on the shape of the bargaining table. Now who is at fault?

It has become clear that the obstacle in negotiating an end to the war is not the President of the United States. And it is not the South Vietnamese.

The obstacle is the other side's absolute refusal to show the least willingness to join us in seeking a just peace. It will not do so while it is convinced that all it has to do is to wait for our next concession, and the next until it gets everything it wants.

There can now be no longer any question that progress in negotiation depends only on Hanoi's deciding to negotiate, to negotiate seriously.

I realize that this report on our efforts on the diplomatic fronts is discouraging to the American people, but the American people are entitled to know the truth—the bad news as well as the good news, where the lives of our young men are involved.

Now let me turn, however, to a more encouraging report on another front.

At the time we launched our search for peace I recognized we might not succeed in bringing an end to the war through negotiation. I, therefore, put into effect another plan to hring peace—a plan which will hring the war to an end regardless of what happens on the negotiating front.

It is in line with a major shift in U.S. foreign policy which I described in my press conference at Guam on July 25. Let me briefly explain what has been described as the Nixon Doctrine—a policy which not only will help end the war in Vietnam, but which is an essential element of our program to prevent future Vietnams.

We Americans are a do-it-yourself people. We are an impatient people. Instead of teaching someone else to do a job, we like to do it ourselves. And this trait has been carried over into our foreign policy.

In Korea and again in Vietnam, the United States furnished most of the money, most of the arms, and most of the men to help the people of those countries defend their freedom against the Communist aggression.

Before any American troops were committed to Vietnam, a leader of another Asian country expressed this opinion to me when I was traveling in Asia as a private citizen. He said, "When you are trying to assist another nation defend its freedom, U.S. policy should be to help them fight the war but not to fight the war for them."

Well, in accordance with this wise counsel, I laid down in Guam three principles as guidelines for fnture American policy toward Asia:

First, the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments.

Second, we shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security.

Third, in cases involving other types of aggression, we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we sball look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.

After I announced this policy, I found that the leaders of the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, and other nations which might be threatened by Communist aggression, welcomed this new direction in American foreign policy.

The defense of freedom is everybody's business—not just America's business. And it is particularly the responsibility of the people whose freedom is threatened. In the previous Administration, we Americanized the war in Vietnam. In this Administration, we are Vietnamizing the search for peace.

The policy of the previous Administration not only resulted in our assuming the primary responsibility for fighting the war but even more significantly did not adequately stress the goal of strengthening the South Vietnamese so that they could defend themselves when we left.

The Vietnamization Plan was launched following Secretary Laird's visit to Vietnam in March. Under the plan, I ordered first a substantial increase in the training and equipment of South Vietnamese forces.

In July, on my visit to Vietnam, I changed General Abrams' orders so that they were consistent with the objectives of our new policies. Under the new orders, the primary mission of our troops is to enable the Sonth Vietnamese forces to assume the full responsibility for the security of South Vietnam.

Our air operations have been reduced by over 20 percent.

And now we have begun to see the results of this long overdue change in American policy in Vietnam.

After five years of Americans going into Vietnam, we are finally bringing American men home. By December 15, over 60,000 men will have been withdrawn from South Vietnam—including 20 percent of all of our combat forces.

The South Vietnamese have continued to gain in strength. As a result they have been able to take over combat responsibilities from our American troops.

Two other significant developments have occurred since this Administration took office.

Enemy infiltration, infiltration which is essential if they are to launch a major attack, over the last three months is less than 20 percent of what it was over the same period last year.

Most important—United States casualties have declined during the last two months to the lowest point in three years.

Let me now turn to our program for the future.

We have adopted a plan which we have worked out in cooperation with the South Vietnamese for the complete withdrawal of all U.S. combat ground forces, and their replacement by South Vietnamese forces on an orderly scheduled timetable. This withdrawal will be made from strength and not from weakness. As South Vietnamese forces become stronger, the rate of American withdrawal can become greater.

I have not and do not intend to announce the timetable for our program. There are obvious reasons for this decision which I am sure you will understand. As I have indicated on several occasions, the rate of withdrawal will depend on developments on three fronts.

One of these is the progress which can be or might be made in the Paris talks. An announcement of a fixed timetable for our witbdrawal would completely remove any incentive for the enemy to negotiate an agreement.

They would simply wait until our forces had withdrawn and then move in.

The other two factors on which we will base our withdrawal decisions are the level of enemy activity and the progress of the training program of the South Vietnamese forces. I am glad to be able to report tonight progress on both of these fronts has been greater than we anticipated when we started the program in June for withdrawal. As a result, our timetable for withdrawal is more optimistic now than when we made our first estimates in June. This clearly demonstrates why it is not wise to be frozen in on a fixed timetable.

We must retain the flexibility to base each withdrawal decision on the situation as it is at that time rather tban on estimates that are no longer valid.

Along with this optimistic estimate, I must—in all candor—leave one note of caution.

If the level of enemy activity significantly increases we might have to adjust our timetable accordingly.

However, I want the record to be completely clear on one point.

At the time of the bombing halt just a year ago, there was some confusion as to whether there was an understanding on the part of the enemy that if we stopped the bombing of North Vietnam they would stop the shelling of cities in South Vietnam. I want to be sure that there is no misunderstanding on the part of the enemy with regard to our withdrawal program.

We have noted the reduced level of infiltration, the reduction of our casualties, and are basing our withdrawal decisions partially on those factors.

If the level of infiltration or our casualties increase while we are tryiug to scale down the fighting, it will be the result of a conscious decision by the enemy.

Hanoi could make no greater mistake than to assume that an increase in violence will be to its advantage. If I conclude that increased enemy action jeopardizes our remaining forces in Vietnam, I shall not hesitate to take strong and effective measures to deal with that situation.

This is not a threat. This is a statement of policy which as Commander-in-Chief of our Armed Forces I am making in meeting my responsibility for the protection of American fighting men wherever they may be.

My fellow Americans, I am sure you recognize from what I have said that we really only have two choices open to us if we want to end this war.

I can order an immediate, precipitate withdrawal of all Americans from Vietnam without regard to the effects of that action.

Or we can persist in our search for a just peace through a negotiated settlement if possible, or through continued implementation of our plan for Vietnamization if necessary—a plan in which we will withdraw all of our forces from Vietnam on a schedule in accordance with our program, as the South Vietnamese become strong enough to defend their own freedom.

I have chosen the second course.

It is not the easy way.

It is the right way.

It is a plan which will end the war and serve the cause of peace—not just in Vietnam hut in the Pacific and in the world.

In speaking of the consequences of a precipitate withdrawal, I mentioned that our allies would lose confidence in America.

Far more dangerous, we would lose confidence in ourselves. The immediate reaction would be a sense of relief that our men were coming home. But as we saw the consequences of what we had done, inevitable remorse and divisive recrimination would scar our spirit as a people.

We have faced other crises in our history and have become stronger by rejecting the easy way out and taking the right way in meeting our challenges. Our greatness as a nation has been our capacity to do what had to be done when we knew our course was right.

I recognize that some of my fellow citizens disagree with the plan for peace I have chosen. Honest and patriotic Americans have reached different conclusions as to how peace should be achieved.

In San Francisco a few weeks ago, I saw demonstrators carrying signs reading: "Lose in Vietnam, bring the boys home."

Well, one of the strengths of our free society is that any American has a right to reach that conclusion and to advocate that point of view. But as President of the United States, I would be untrue to my oath of office if I allowed the policy of this nation to be dictated by the minority who hold that point of view and who try to impose it on the nation by mounting demonstrations in the street.

For almost 200 years, the policy of this nation has been made under our Constitution by those leaders in the Congress and in the White House selected by all of the people. If a vocal minority, however fervent its cause, prevails over reason and the will of the majority this nation has no future as a free society.

And now I would like to address a word if I may to the young people of this nation who are particularly concerned, and I understand why they are concerned about this war.

I respect your idealism.

I share your concern for peace.

I want peace as much as you do.

There are powerful personal reasons I want to end this war. This week I will have to sign 83 letters to mothers, fathers, wives and loved ones of men who have given their lives for America in Vietnam. It is very little satisfaction to me that this is only one-third as many letters as I signed the first week in office. There is nothing I want more than to see the day come when I do not have to write any of those letters.

—I want to end the war to save the lives of those brave young men in Vietnam.

—But I want to end it in a way which will increase the chance that their younger brothers and their sons will not have to fight in some future Vietnam someplace in the world.

—And I want to end the war for another reason. I want to end it so that the energy and dedication of you, our young people, now too often directed into bitter hatred against those responsible for the war, can be turned to the great challenges of peace, a better life for all Americans, a better life for all people on this earth.

I have chosen a plan for peace. I believe it will succeed.

If it does not succeed, what the critics say now won't matter. Or, if it does succeed, what the critics say now won't matter. If it does not succeed, anything I say then won't matter.

I know it may not be fashionable to speak of patriotism or national destiny these days. But I feel it is appropriate to do so on this occasion.

Two hundred years ago this nation was weak and poor. But even then, America was the hope of millions in the world. Today we have become the strongest and richest nation in the world. The wheel of destiny has turned so that any hope the world has for the survival of peace and freedom will be determined by whether the American people have the moral stamina and the courage to meet the challenge of free world leadership.

Let historians not record that when America was the most powerful nation in the world we passed on the other side of the road and allowed the last hopes for peace and freedom of millions of people to be suffocated by the forces of totalitarianism.

And so tonight—to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans—I ask for your support.

I pledged in my campaign for the Presidency to end the war in a way that we could win the peace. I have initiated a plan of action which will enable me to keep that pledge.

The more support I can have from the American people, the sooner that pledge can be redeemed; for the more divided we are at home, the less likely the enemy is to negotiate at Paris.

Let us be united for peace. Let us also be united against defeat. Because let us understand: North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that.

Fifty years ago, in this room and at this very desk, President Woodrow Wilson spoke words which caught the imagination of a war-weary world. He said, "This

is the war to end wars." His dream for peace after World War I was shattered on the hard realities of great power politics and Woodrow Wilson died a broken man.

Tonight I do not tell you that the war in Vietnam is the war to end wars. But I do say this:

I have initiated a plan which will end this war in a way that will bring us closer to that great goal to which Woodrow Wilson and every American President in our history has been dedicated—the goal of a just and lasting peace.

As President I hold the responsibility for choosing the best path to that goal and then leading the nation along it.

I pledge to you tonight that I shall meet this responsibility with all of the strength and wisdom I can command in accordance with your hopes, mindful of your concerns, sustained by your prayers.

Thank you and good night.

TEXTS OF PRESIDENT NIXON AND PRESIDENT HO CHI MINH LETTERS

JULY 15, 1969.

His Excellency HO CHI MINH,
President, Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Hanoi.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I realize that it is difficult to communicate meaningfully across the gulf of four years of war. But precisely because of this gulf, I wanted to take this opportunity to reaffirm in all solemnity my desire to work for a just peace. I deeply believe that the war in Vietnam has gone on too long and delay in bringing it to an end can benefit no one—least of all the people of Vietnam.

My speech on May 14 laid out a proposal which I believe is fair to all parties. Other proposals have been made which attempt to give the people of South Vietnam an opportunity to choose their own future. These proposals take into account the reasonable conditions of all sides. But we stand ready to discuss other programs as well, specifically the 10 point program of the N.L.F.

As I have said repeatedly, there is nothing to be gained by waiting. Delay can only increase the dangers and multiply the suffering.

The time has come to move forward at the conference table toward an early resolution of this tragic war. You will find us forthcoming and open-minded in a common effort to bring the blessings of peace to the brave people of Vietnam. Let history record that at this critical juncture, both sides turned their face toward peace rather than toward conflict and war.

Sincerely,

RICHARD NIXON.

Following is the text of the reply, which was received in Paris on Aug. 30, 1969:

HANOI, *Aug. 25, 1969.*

His Excellency RICHARD MILHOUS NIXON,
President of the United States, Washington.

MR. PRESIDENT: I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter.

The war of aggression of the United States against our people, violating our fundamental national rights, still continues in South Vietnam. The United States continues to intensify military operations, the B–52 bombings and the use of toxic chemical products multiply the crimes against the Vietnamese people. The longer the war goes on, the more it accumulates the mourning and burdens of the American people. I am extremely indignant at the losses and destructions caused by the American troops to our people and our country. I am also deeply touched at the rising toll of death of young Americans who have fallen in Vietnam by reason of the policy of American governing circles.

Our Vietnamese people are deeply devoted to peace, a real peace with independence and real freedom. They are determined to fight to the end, without fearing the sacrifices and difficulties in order to defend their country and their sacred national rights. The over-all solution in 10 points of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam and of the provisional revolutionary government of the Republic of South Vietnam is a logical and reasonable basis for the settlement of the Vietnamese problem. It has earned the sympathy and support of the peoples of the world.

In your letter you have expressed the desire to act for a just peace. For this the United States must cease the war of aggression and withdraw their troops from

South Vietnam, respect the right of the population of the South and of the Vietnamese nation to dispose of themselves, without foreign influence. This is the correct manner of solving the Vietnamese problem in conformity with the national rights of the Vietnamese people, the interests of the United States and the hopes for peace of the peoples of the world. This is the path that will allow the United States to get out of the war with honor.

With goodwill on both sides we might arrive at common efforts in view of finding a correct solution of the Vietnamese problem.

Sincerely,

HO CHI MINH.

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT ON VIETNAM ON NATIONWIDE RADIO AND TELEVISION

[From the Office of the White House Press Secretary, May 14, 1969]

Good evening, my fellow Americans.

I have asked for this television time tonight to report to you on our most difficult and urgent problem—the war in Vietnam.

Since I took office four months ago, nothing has taken so much of my time and energy as the search for a way to bring lasting peace to Vietnam. I know that some believe I should have ended the war immediately after the inauguration by simply ordering our forces home from Vietnam.

This would have been the easy thing to do. It might have been a popular move. But I would have betrayed my solemn responsibility as President of the United States if I had done so.

I want to end this war. The American people want to end this war. The people of South Vietnam want to end this war. But we want to end it permanently so that the younger brothers of our soldiers in Vietnam will not have to fight in the future in another Vietnam someplace else in the world.

The fact that there is no easy way to end the war does not mean that we have no choice but to let the war drag on with no end in sight.

For four years American boys have been fighting and dying in Vietnam. For 12 months our negotiators have been talking with the other side in Paris. And yet the fighting goes on. The destruction continues. Brave men still die.

The time has come for some new initiatives. Repeating the old formulas and the tired rhetoric of the past is not enough. When Americans are risking their lives in war, it is the responsibility of their leaders to take some risks for peace.

I would like to report to you tonight on some of the things we have been doing in the past four months to bring true peace, and then I would like to make some concrete proposals to speed that day.

Our first step began before inauguration. This was to lauuch an intensive review of every aspect of the Nation's Vietnam policy. We accepted nothing in faith, we challenged every assumption and every statistic. We made a systematic, serious examination of all the alternatives open to us. We carefully considered recommendations offered both by critics and supporters of past policies.

From the review, it become clear at once that the new Administration faced a set of immediate operational problems.

The other side was preparing for a new offensive.

There was a wide gulf of distrust between Washington and Saigon.

In eight months of talks iu Paris, there had been no negotiations directly concerned with a final settlement.

Therefore, we moved on several fronts at once.

We frustrated the attack which was launched in late February. As a result, the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong failed to achieve their military objectives.

We restored a close working relationship with Saigon. In the resulting atmosphere of mutual confidence, President Thieu and his Government have taken important initiatives in the search for a settlement.

We speeded up the strengtbening of the South Vietnamese forces. I am glad to report tonight, that as a result, General Abrams told me on Monday that progress in the training program had been excellent, and that apart from any developments that may occur in the negotiations in Paris, that time is approaching when South Vietnamese forces will be able to take over some of the fighting fronts now being manned by Americans.

In weighing alternate courses, we have had to recognize that the situation as it exists today is far different from what it was two years ago or four years ago or ten years ago.

One difference is that we no longer have the choice of not intervening. We have crossed that bridge. There are now more than a half million American troops in Vietnam and 35,000 Americans have lost their lives.

We can have honest debate about whether we should have entered the war in Vietnam. We can have honest debate about how the war has been conducted. But the urgent question today is what to do now that we are there.

Against that background, let me discuss first wbat we have rejected, and second, what we are prepared to accept.

We have ruled out attempting to impose a purely military solution on the battlefield.

We have also ruled out either a one-sided withdrawal from Vietnam, or the acceptance in Paris of terms that would amount to a disguised American defeat.

When we assumed the burden of helping defend South Vietnam, millions of South Vietnamese men, women and children placed their trust in us. To abandon them now would risk a massacre that would shock and dismay everyone in the world who values human life.

Abandoning the South Vietnamese people, however, would jeopardize more than lives in South Vietnam. It would threaten our long-term hopes for peace in the world. A great nation cannot renege on its pledges. A great nation must be worthy of trust.

When it comes to maintaining peace, "prestige" is not an empty word. I am not speaking of false pride or bravado—they should have no place in our policies. I speak, rather, of the respect that one nation has for another's integrity in defending its principles and meeting its obligations.

If we simply abandoned our effort in Vietnam, the cause of peace might not survive the damage that would be done to other nations' confidence in our reliability.

Another reason for not withdrawing unilaterally stems from debates within the Communist world between those who argue for a policy of containment or confrontation with the United States, and those who argue against it.

If Hanoi were to succeed in taking over South Vietnam by force—even after the power of the United States bad been engaged—it would greatly strengthen those leaders wbo scorn negotiation, who advocate aggression, who minimize the risks of confrontation with the United States. It would bring peace now but it would enormously increase the danger of a bigger war later.

If we are to move successfully from an era of confrontation to an era of negotiation, then we have to demonstrate—at the point at which confrontation is being tested—that confrontation with the United States is costly and unrewarding.

Almost without exception, the leaders of non-Communist Asia have told me that they would consider a one-sided American withdrawal from Vietnam to be a threat to the security of their own nations.

In determining what choices would be acceptable, we have to understand our essential objective in Vietnam: What we want is very little, but very fundamental. We seek the opportunity for the South Vietnamese people to determine their own political future without outside interference.

Let me put it plainly: What the United States wants for South Vietnam is not the important thing. What North Vietnam wants for South Vietnam is not the important thing. What is important is what the people of South Vienam want for South Vietnam.

The United States has suffered over a million casualties in four wars in this century. Whatever faults we may have as a nation, we have asked nothing for ourselves in return for those sacrifices. We have been generous toward those whom we have fought. We have helped our former foes as well as our friends in the task of reconstruction. We are proud of this record, and we bring the same attitnde in our search for a settlemen in Vietnam.

In this spirit, let me be explicit about several points:

We seek no bases in Vietnam.

We seek no military ties.

We are willing to agree to neutrality for South Vietnam if that is what the South Vietnamese people freely choose.

We helieve there should be an opportunity for full participation in the political life of South Vietnam by all political elements that are prepared to do so without the use of force or intimidation.

We are prepared to accept any government in South Vietnam that results from the free choice of the South Vietnamese people themselves.

We have no intention of imposing any form of government upon the people of South Vietnam, nor will we be a party to such coercion.

We have no objection to reunification, if that turns out to be what the people of North Vietnam and the people of South Vietnam want; we ask only that the decision reflect the free choice of the people concerned.

At this point, I would like to add a personal word based on many visits to South Vietnam over the past five years. This is the most difficult war in America's history, fought against a ruthless enemy. I am proud of our men who have carried the terrible burden of this war with dignity and courage, despite the division and opposition to the war in the United States. History will record that never have America's fighting men fought more bravely for more unselfish goals than our men in Vietnam. It is our responsibility to see that they have not fought in vain.

In pursuing our limited objective, we insist on no rigid diplomatic formula. Peace could be achieved by a formal negotiated settlement. Peace could be achieved by an informal understanding, provided that the understanding is clear, and that there were adequate assurances that it would be observed. Peace on paper is not as important as peace in fact.

This brings us to the matter of negotiations.

We must recognize that peace in Vietnam cannot be achieved overnight. A war that has raged for many years will require detailed negotiations and cannot be settled by a single stroke.

What kind of a settlement will permit the South Vietnamese people to determine freely their own political future? Such a settlement will require the withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces, including our own, from South Vietnam, and procedures for political choice that give each significant group in South Vietnam a real opportunity to participate in the political life of the nation.

To implement these principles, I reaffirm now our willingness to withdraw our forces on a specified timetable. We ask only that North Vietnam withdraw its forces from South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos into North Vietnam, also in accordance with a timetable.

We include Cambodia and Laos to insure that these countries would not be used as bases for a renewed war. Our offer provides for a simultaneous start on withdrawal by both sides; for agreement on a mutually acceptable timetable; and for the withdrawal to be accomplished quickly.

The North Vietnamese delegates have been saying in Paris that political issues should be discussed along with military issues, and there must be a political settlement in the South. We do not dispute this, but the military withdrawal involves outside forces, and can, therefore, be properly negotiated by North Vietnam and the United States, with the concurrence of its allies.

The political settlement is an internal matter which ought to be decided among the South Vietnamese themselves, and not imposed by outsiders. However, if our presence at these political negotiations would be helpful, and if the South Vietnamese concerned agreed, we would be willing to participate, along with the representatives of Hanoi, if that also were desired.

Recent statements by President Thieu have gone far toward opening the way to a political settlement. He has publicly declared his government's willingness to discuss a political solution with the National Liberation Front, and has offered free elections. This was a dramatic step forward, a reasonable offer that could lead to a settlement. The South Vietnamese Government has offered to talk without preconditions. I believe the other side should also be willing to talk without preconditions.

The South Vietnamese government recognizes, as we do, that a settlement must permit all persons and groups that are prepared to renounce the use of force to participate freely in the political life of South Vietnam. To be effective, such a settlement would require two things: First, a process that would allow the South Vietnamese people to express their choice; and, second, a guarantee that this process would be a fair one.

We do not insist on a particular form of guarantee. The important thing is that the guarantees should have the confidence of the South Vietnamese people, and that they should be broad enough and strong enough to protect the interests of all major South Vietnamese groups.

This, then, is the outline of the settlement that we seek to negotiate in Paris. Its basic terms are very simple: Mutual withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam, and free choice for the people of South Vietnam. I believe that the long-term interests of peace require that we insist on no less, and that the realities of the situation require that we seek no more.

And now, to make very concrete what I have said, I propose the following specific measures, which seem to me consistent with the principles of all parties.

These proposals are made on the basis of full consultation with President Thieu.

As soon as agreement can be reached, all non-South Vietnamese forces would begin withdrawals from South Vietnam.

Over a period of twelve months, by agreed-npon stages, the major portions of all U.S., Allied, and other non-South Vietnamese forces would be withdrawn. At the end of this twelve month period, the remaining U.S., Allied and other non-South Vietnamese forces would move into designated base areas and would not engage in combat operations.

The remaining U.S. and Allied forces would complete their withdrawals as the remaining North Vietnamese forces were withdrawn and returned to North Vietnam.

An international supervisory body, acceptable to botb sides, wonld be created for the purpose of verifying withdrawals, and for any other purposes agreed upon between the two sides.

This international body would begin operating in accordance with an agreed timetable and would participate in arranging supervised cease fires in Vietnam.

As soon as possible after the international body was functioning, elections would be held under agreed procedures and under the supervision of the international body.

Arrangements would be made for the release of prisoners of war on both sides at the earliest possible time.

All parties would agree to observe the Geneva Accords of 1954 regarding South Vietnam and Cambodia, and the Laos Accords of 1962.

I believe his proposal for peace is realistic, and takes account of the legitimate interests of all concerned, it is consistent with President Thieu's six points. It can accommodate the various programs put forth by the other side. We and the Government of South Vietnam are prepared to discuss its details with the other side.

Secretary Rogers is uow in Saigon and he will be discussing with President Thieu how, together, we may put forward these proposed measures most usefully in Paris. He will, as well, be consulting with our other Asian allies on these measures while on his Asian trip. However, I would stress that these proposals are not offered on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. We are quite willing to consider other approaches consistent with our principles.

We are willing to talk about anybody's program—Hanoi's four poiuts, the NLF's 10 points—provided it can be made consistent with the very few basic principles I have set forth here.

Despite our disagreement with several of its points, we welcome the fact that the NLF has put forward its first comprehensive program. We are studying that program carefully. However, we cannot ignore the fact that immediately after the offer, the scale of enemy attacks stepped up and American casnalties in Vietnam increased.

Let me make one point clear. If the enemy wants peace with the United States, that is not the way to get it.

I have set forth a peace program tonight which is generous in its terms. I have indicated our willingness to consider other proposals. But no greater mistake could be made than to confuse flexibility with weakness or of being reasonable with lack of resolution. I must also make clear, in all candor, that if the ueedless suffering continues, this will affect other decisions. Nobody has anything to gain by delay.

Reports from Hanoi indicate that the enemy has given up hope for a military victory in South Vietnam, but is counting on a collapse of American will in the United States. There could be no greater error in judgment.

Let me be quite blunt. Our fighting men are not going to be worn down; our mediators are not going to be talked down; and our allies are not going to be let down.

My fellow Americans, I have seen the ugly face of war in Vietnam. I have seen the wounded in field hospitals—American boys, Soutb Vietnamese boys, North Vietnamese boys. They were different in many ways—the color of their skins, their religions, their races, some were enemies; some were friends.

But the differences were small, compared with how they were alike. They were brave men, and they were so young. Their lives—their dreams for the future—had heen shattered by a war over which they had no control.

With all the moral authority of the office which I hold, I say that America could have no greater and prouder role than to help to end this war in a way which will bring nearer that day in which we can have a world order in which people can live together in peace and friendship.

that it was in the common interests of both sides to find some formula which would break the deadlock at Paris and set in motion the process of peace. It was at this encounter with Xuan Thuy that he gave me to understand that Ho Chi Minh was dying although the actual news did not become public until two days later. I had alluded to the well-known flexibility and farsightedness of Ho Chi Minh (whom I had met in the jungles of north Vietnam in 1953) as an argument in favor of a similar flexibility on north Vietnam's part in the present deadlock. I also had stressed to Xuan Thuy that the United States was placing itself in a position to negotiate seriously with both the Soviet Union and Communist China and hence the era of trying to take advantage of the Sino-Soviet rift was coming to a close; it therefore seemed to me that it was in North Vietnam's interest to find a way of negotiating directly with the United States and not to allow their negotiations to become part of the great-power rivalry or the great-power settlement, as had happened in 1954. I had, of course, summarized for Xuan Thuy the essential elements of my conversations with Kissinger at San Clemente two weeks earlier and given him my own impressions of Kissinger as a person and a thinker. Basically, it was my view that Kissinger wanted very much to get out of the war, and above all wanted to save President Nixon's political career for 1972 but was tryiug to get out of the war cheaply, paying a minimum price and was convinced it was possible to do so while retaining control of the situation in Saigon, avoiding either the sharing of power with the Viet Cong or a coup from the "Right" or from independent forces which might lead to a coalition to the exclusion of an American role in the matter. You will find my views in this regard in any memorandum to Kissinger himself but I emphasize this in order to make clear the context of the discussion from Xuan Thuy in which his proposals were made.

After a long, heated exchange of views within the framework, of course, of our long-term relationsbip, Xuan Thuy declared: "Very well, let us assume, as you say, that Mr. Kissinger does want peace . . . The United States side has for a long time been asking for private talks with our side. We are willing to have such private talks provided that the United States accepts the principle for a complete and total withdrawal and shows its good faith by withdrawing 100,000 troops. On this basis, we are prepared for private talks either among themselves, the Provisional Revolutionary Government (the Viet Cong) and the United States, or pending the possibility that the United States will not wish to talk with us in the presence of the PRG, we are prepared for talks between ourselves and the United States. In those talks, he continued, we propose to examine the various points which have been advanced by both sides. It is not true that we reject everything that the United States may propose. On the crucial question of who will organize the elections we do not mean that the PRG proposes only a provisional government headed by itself. We have in mind a provisional coalition government that will include others who stand for peace, independence, democracy and neutrality including some members of the present Saigon administration.

He then concluded that the PRG, that is, the Viet Cong goveruing body is prepared a) either for a settlement that is reached, rapidly, peacefully, logically and reasonably or b) that the war will drag on, or c) be expanded.

I realized that Xuan Thuy was herewith saying something very substantive and at this point left the room, and returned to ask him whether he would restate what he had just said since it seemed to me of great importance. He reformulated the same propositions, asking his interpreter to check what he had said a moment before.

That something new was being said was underlined the next day, when Xuan Thuy spoke to the newspapermen of Paris who had come to the September 2 anniversary celebrations. It was at this occasion that he repeated Hanoi's flexibility: if the United States would accept the *principle* of complete withdrawal and actually withdraw 100,000 troops, North Vietnam "would take this into consideration." This was quoted in *Le Monde* and the Paris *Herald-Tribune* the next day but it was noted in the State Department which was quoted that next day as saying that the proposal was "ambiguous" and required further clarification. President Nixon's address to the United Nations General Assembly also noted Xuan Thuy's statement and maintained that the U.S. had in fact met this proposal and did in fact accept the principle of withdrawal, but Mr. Nixon argued that the withdrawal of 35,000 troops was in fact enough. It should be noted that the remainder of what Xuan Thuy proposed—namely, private talks and a readiness for flexibility on the make-up of a provisional coalition govern-

I do not criticize those who disagree with me on the conduct of our peace negotiations. And I do not ask unlimited patience from a people whose hopes for peace have too often been raised and then cruelly dashed over the past four years.

I have tried to present the facts about Vietnam with complete honesty, and I shall continue to do so in my reports to the American people.

Tonight, all I ask is that you consider these facts, and, whatever our differences, that you support a program which can lead to a peace we can live with and a peace we can be proud of. Nothing could have a greater effect in convincing the enemy that he should negotiate in good faith than to see the American people united behind a generous and reasonable peace offer.

In my campaign for the Presidency, I pledged to end this war in a way that would increase our chances to win true and lasting peace in Vietnam, in the Pacific, and in the world. I am determined to keep that pledge. If I fail to do so, I expect the American people to hold me accountable for that failure.

But while I will never raise false expectations, my deepest hope, as I speak to you tonight, is that we shall be able to look back on this day, at this critical turning point when American initiative moved us off dead center and forward to the time when this war would be brought to an end and when we shall be able to devote the unlimited energies and dedication of the American people to the exciting challenges of peace.

Thank you, and good night.

TEXT OF LETTER FROM PROFESSOR JOSEPH R. STAROBIN TO SENATOR FULBRIGHT

YORK UNIVERSITY,
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, November 6, 1969.

Senator J. W. FULBRIGHT,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR FULBRIGHT: I hereby submit to you as full an account as I can give of the proposals made by Xuan Thuy, the North Vietnamese ambassador to the Paris talks, to Dr. Henry Kissinger, the special adviser to the President.

I am responding to your request of October 28, 1969 which came in answer to my own letter of October 15, including enclosures of several clippings, one from the N.Y. *Times* and another from the N.Y. *Post* which had elements of this episode. Forgive me for having delayed this submission, since like everyone else I was awaiting President Nixon's policy address of Tuesday last.

I enclose also a copy of the memorandum which was sent to Dr. Kissinger at his request on what I believed to be the situation in Hanoi following Ho Chi Minh's death; this memorandum, while strictly analytical, also contains in its closing passages something of my own views on the problem of negotiating an end to this war. I should add that the memorandum was acknowledged by Dr. Kissinger, with thanks.

The proposals by Xuan Thuy were made to me on September 1st, at his headquarters in Paris, at Choisy-le-Roi, in the presence of his interpreter and his private secretary both of whom had taken extensive notes of our discussion which lasted for several hours. The proposals were made in the knowledge that I was planning to see Dr. Kissinger within a week; I had made this arrangement following an earlier interview with Dr. Kissinger on August 12th at San Clemente; that interview followed in turn a still earlier discussion with Xuan Thuy which took place in Paris on July 26th. Thus Dr. Kissinger knew that I was in intimate discussions with the North Vietnamese and he invited me after I gave him an initial report on August 12th to be in touch with him if I had anything further to report upon his return from the West. I was able to see Kissinger at the White House on September 10, two days before the comprehensive review of Vietnam policy that week.

Thus, everyone was aware on both sides, that an attempt was being made to find a new negotiating formula. This formula has been before Kissinger and I would assume the President, as well, since September 10th.

In my second encounter with Xuan Thuy I had argued that there was a genuine desire for extrication from this war not only among wide and diverse sections of the American public but also among important policy-makers and I had argued

ment was not made public. This was left to me for transmission to Dr. Kissinger.

To summarize this crucial point: early in September, as part of a cross-discussion in which I was twice an intermediary, the North Vietnamese indicated that they would accept the principle of complete withdrawal instead of total and prior withdrawal as the condition which could open the way to private talks with the United States; they also indicated a readiness to talk without the presence of the Viet Cong (at least as of September 1st) and thirdly, they indicated they would not be adamant on a provisional coalition government defined by their side but were ready to bargain for something between their conceptions and the American conceptions, making "room for some members of the present Saigon administration." And they also indicated strongly their readiness for a reasonable, logical and speedy end of the war, using the phrase "within four or five months."

All of this, plus much more of the background of both my conversations with Xuan Thuy—in July and in September—were communicated by me to Dr. Kissinger, the second time upon his invitation. I would not have made any part of this public were it not for the fact that toward the end of September an inspired story in the Knight papers gave the impression that negotiations were going on when in fact they were not, and when the terms for starting them had not, as I knew, been fulfilled. I have made parts of all this public only because to remain silent would have been a tacit complicity with the Administration's unwillingness to negotiate except on its own terms. I do not believe negotiations are possible except as both sides indicate flexibility. On our side, it is now clear from the President's address, the attempt is being made to give the impression that the other side will not be flexible, which is untrue, and to cling to the Thieu regime as the only legitimate regime and to hold the card of further troop withdrawals as a bargaining counter.

My own opinion is that the Administration is trying to do something which most poker-playing Americans would recognize as untenable in their own daily lives: the war has been played with poor cards and has not been a winning proposition but the Administration is trying to walk away from the game not only refusing to pay any price, but wanting to keep the chips in the center of the table at the same time!

I am at your disposal with any further data you may wish on the whole exchange of July 26, August 12, September 1 and September 10, but this would require a much more elaborate memorandum since it involves establishing the context of each meeting with each side and also involves disclosing the detailed exchanges and the assumptions between all the interlocutors. Since much of this has a confidential character, and may not be essential to the main point—namely that there was a serious and flexible proposal from Hanoi's side—I am reluctant to do so, except with your encouragement.

I am, of course, prepared to testify under oath on all these matters contained herewith if you should consider this necessary, and I have privately taped, after each interview, my best recollection of what was said by me and by the people with whom I spoke, tapes made immediately after each conversation. This was done for my personal record.

I trust all this will be helpful, and I remain,

Sincerely yours,

JOSEPH R. STAROBIN,
Assistant Professor.

SEPTEMBER 18, 1969.

Mr. HENRY KISSINGER,
Special Assistant to the President
The White House, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. KISSINGER: You asked me on September 10th, little more than a week ago, for my views on the new situation resulting from the death of Ho Chi Minh and my judgment of how this event bears on the probable outlook of his associates and successors in Hanoi.

Let me begin by stressing some obvious facts with respect to the personality and position of Ho himself both within the Hanoi hierarchy and throughout the international Communist movement. As you know, I spent several weeks in the jungles of North Vietnam in February-March, 1953, one of the few foreigners to do so, and at that time had several extended conversations with Ho alone and also in the company of his chief aide at that time, now the premier, Pham Von Dong. I was present at the funeral ceremony for Joseph Stalin in the for-

ests during which Ho Chi Minh delivered the eulogy, and thus my view of him derives from the period both before and after Stalin's death, therefore a period of drastic change in the world communist movement and also of the perspectives for the North Vietnamese at that time. In some ways the present period resembles that one. In my extensive conversations with Xuan Thuy, the Hanoi ambassador to the Paris peace talks on September 1st, 1969 the essence of which I have already recounted to you (the earlier conversation was on July 26th) it was evident that Xuan Thuy was taking into account the news he already had that Ho Chi Minh was dying. Thus the judgment of Xuan Thuy's proposals to the United States for private talks while the Paris conference goes on in public must take into account that this offer was made in the knowledge that Ho was passing. Xuan Thuy two days later left for Hanoi and I am writing in the effort to judge the calculations and the possible upshot of the decisions which will be taken in these days by Ho's successors and which will govern Xuan Thuy's subsequent conduct.

Ho Chi Minh was, of course, not merely the best known Vietnamese revolutionary leader but his life has certain specific features which all those who were brought up in his spirit and shadow are bound to take into account. He was the patriarch, the man who went out into the wider world but returned to do what he saw as service to his people. He was the *worldly* figure, with a vast experience in French life, in the Soviet Union of the early Comintern days, in China both during the 1924–27 events and from 1941 to 1945, and finally the man who had a brief contact with the United States and also, by virtue of his operations in Singapore and Hongkong had a contact with British life. No other Vietnamese figure had this experience. Most of his associates had part of this experience, but by contrast with him they are "provincials". In their eyes, Ho had a particular charisma. His last testament stresses strong pride that the Vietnamese are the only small people who have succeeded in doiug real damage to two big powers, France and the United States. It also expresses dismay over the crisis which has wracked the communist world, especially over the differences between the Soviet Union and China. Both considerations—the injunction to unify the country and to overcome the Sino-Soviet rivalry—are likely to weigh heavily with Ho's successors since in both matters their vital interests are involved. Ho Chi Minh's "image" also evoked a peculiarly ascetic, self-sacrificing quality—qualities which have deep roots in the Oriental as well as commnuist traditions—and this image is also likely to weigh heavily with his associates and successors. It should be noted finally that over the past five years, Ho Chi Minh had become a world-figure. It is no small matter that in widely separated parts of the globe and among young and old of very different cultures Ho Chi Minh had become revered, especially on the part of the "new Left." He was in fact the only communist figure in our day to have retained great prestige, a prestige which grew wbereas all other figures connected with this war suffered a dastic decline of influence. This fact is also likely to influence the men in Hanoi who must now make decisions on their own.

It would be entirely shortsighted to view these aspects of Ho's legacy with cynicism or to dismiss the moral force they exert. Whatever may be thought of all this by his opponents, these matters exercise genuine historical power. Ho Chi Minh was the last of the "old Bolsheviks" and probably the most remarkable since Leuin. If there is in our tradition the song about John Brown whose "soul goes marching on" it should take not much imagination to appreciate, without arrogance and with uuderstanding, that this must he the same for Ho in his world and beyond it.

It is easy enough to believe, based on historical experience in other communist countries, that the north Vietnamese will now face a crisis of succession. The experts have long divined important differences between Truong Chinh, for example, and General Vo Nguyen Giap and have long speculated on the personality and origins (as a southerner) of Le Duan, the secretary of the Lao Dong Party. A case can be made that Ho Chi Minh himself had problems in his life-time with rivals, especially in the south, and the most meticulous observers, such as Ellen Hammer or I. Milton Sacks, have chronicled these matters. I would not off-hand deny that the Vietnamese will not be immune to the succession problems of other communists in our time. Yet a case can also be made with equal force that Ho had built a peculiarly tight team of younger men, over a long period of time and that he had the opportunity of learning from the experience of other communists; and finally that in view of the strong probability that Ho had been sinking since the last spring, the succession crisis will be avoided or delayed. It is alto-

gether probable that for some period of time, the men who now share power had come to important decisions and their line of condnct for some time has been based on the prospect of Ho's disappearance from the scene.

Thus, from the viewpoint of American policy-decisions, it may be entirely self-deceiving to assume that the succession crisis in Hanoi is now taking place or is about to take place. It is also just as possible and more probable that it has already taken place and that the conduct of Hanoi since the spring represents this decision. I call attention to the fact that during my last conversation with Xuan Thuy, on September 1st, he himself broached the news that Ho was dying and specifically stressed the collegial character of Ho's leadership and the fact that over a quarter of a century the men aronnd him had made decisions on their own while Ho was absent from the country, decisions which he subse-quently ratified. It can be reasoned that Xuan Thuy's desire to dismiss the factor of elite-conflict in Hanoi suggests a very fear of such conflict. Bnt it can also be reasoned that his warning—and he knew I wonld be voicing his views in Washington within a week—should be taken literally. I would add on my own that from the inception of this war, important policy-makers, notably of the previous Administration, entirely misjudged the behavior in Hanoi. It was assumed by Mr. Walt W. Rostow, by Dean Rusk, by policy-planners snch as Prof. Zbigniew Brzezinski that the latent contradictions between north and sontb, the divergent interests of the "New Left" such as the Viet Cong really are and the "old Left" in Hanoi could be utilized by American policy. I have a very vivid recollection of the arguments early in 1965 hy many important and influential men that Ho Chi Minh would never risk the serious damage to the north which American bombardment might inflict and would opt to defend his urgent interests by abandoning the Viet Cong. This calculation has led the Unlted States into much of the dilemma which the war represents. I would question the wisdom of continuing a policy of gambling on profonnd policy-differences in the north Vietnamese communist hierarchy. Differences as theirs must be, it is more logical to assume that at a critical moment in the war and the peace negotiations which are part of the war, these differences will be muted. It is highly nnlikely that until the peace is more nearly secure policy differences will break out.

It would be prudent for serious American policy-makers to try to make a sober and comprehensive judgment of the North Vietnamese problem as it is being seen and discussed in Hanoi at this moment.

In my view, the men in Hanoi have since late spring been governed by a variety of guidelines:

(*a*) they must take advantage of the present period for the most rapid reconstruction and consolidation in the north, now free of bombardment, while seeking to arrive at a settlement with the United States whicb gives the southern communists as likely a chance of political power at some early date as at all possible. While utilizing their armed forces at one or another level, the chief direction of Hanoi's politics consists of trying to extract a peace that the north can live with and gives the southerners a chance to realize a long-range political position. It will be noticed that I proceed from the assumption that the basic aims of the Vietnamese communists remain what they have always been—to consolidate their own regime in the north, to shatter the opposing south Vietnamese political structure, to lay the basis by stages for a government in the south that they can live with and with which they can ultimately transact the difficult business of unification.

(*b*) to conduct both war and peace simultaneously or successively in such a way as to maintain maximum material support from both the Soviet Union and China but avoiding if at all possible a dependence on these two powers. Concretely, the men in Hanoi must be expected to try to avoid allowing the peace negotiations which they have advanced so skillfully with the United States over the past 18 months from becoming involved with the negotiations that both Moscow and Peking have undertaken or are contemplating with Washington. Although the men in Hanoi have much to gain from any development which decreases or minimizes the Sino-Soviet antagonism and although they must be expected to try to maintain maximum freedom of action and decision vis a vis both their powerful allies, they must also be expected to try to avoid allowing *their* negotiations to become counters or factors in the negotiations whicb they know both their allies are capable of carrying out with the United States. They make a serious calculation that the United States has now entered a phase of basic bargaining with both Russia and China and indeed with the

eastern European states. When I underlined this reality in my talk with Xuan Thuy in July he listened most carefully and did not dispute the point. But what Hanoi must try to avoid is what happened in 1954, when it accepted half a loaf from the French under the persuasive pressure of both Khrushchev's advance to full power in Moscow and Mao Tse-tnng's "Bandeung" gambit.

(c) Hanoi must be expected to make those moves in Laos which concert with its basic problems in south Vietnam and in the peninsula as a whole. The north Vietnamese communists may separate the Laos problem militarily and politically if its suits them, or include it within the bargaining over stages. But it is reasonable to assume and unwise to forget that the situation in Laos constitutes for them a vital interest. They have a large population astride the frontiers of old Indo-China: they have historical grievances and fears as regards Thailand's politics; they know better than our experts the historic problems with Cambodia as Prince Sihanouk periodically reminds them. The Laotian problem is quite central to them. In any serious negotiation for a settlement the United States will find that Laos is unsettled until it becomes part of a Vietnam solution—whether in the immediate bargaining or at a later stage. I would bear in mind that throughout this spring and summer, significant military changes have been going on in Laos and the same political chess is being played there as in south Vietnam, even if at a stage once removed. It should be noted that both Sihanouk and Souvanna Phouma came to Ho's funeral. This was not only a gesture of courtesy to an all-Indochina figure, but expresses concrete political realities and awareness of them on all sides.

(d) The fourth and final guideline which I believe forms part of Hanoi's frame of reference involves longterm economic considerations. They must reconstruct the north rapidly; they must reckon with an evolution in the south in which their political influence will also he a function of their economic strength. They must satisfy the fact that the entire social structure both north and south has changed under the impact of the war. Vietnam is bound to be one of the most dynamic and economically-most-ripe for development countries of southeast Asia. Millions of people have learned the use of machinery thanks to the experience of war and the traditional barriers to development have been broken down. In order to capitalize on this sitnation, to meet its challenges and to dovetail economic with military power and thus achieve appropriate politlcal power, the Vietnamese communists must have a perspective of economic assistance. They are undoubtedly making such demands on both Russia and China as well as on all the eastern European countries. But the character of this help is qualitatively different from asking for ammunition, weapons or food. Vietnam's demands and needs are bound to be a strain on its ideological allies even granting their willingness to assist—a willingness which is circumscribed by their own needs and priorities and decreases in urgency as the peace is achieved. The north Vietnameses are therefore trying to calculate what role other capitalist countries can play in this regard, and they are watcbing very carefully what the line of thought is in Washington. Again, when I mentioned to Xuan Thuy in my overall review of July 26th, not having seen him in 16 years but proceeding from a certain common ideological heritage, that in the long run the ultimate form of American reparations might be serious American assistance in the upbuilding of the entire Mekong area, he listened very carefully. I would call attention to the fact that when the French journalist-photographer, Mare Riboud, visited Hanol last autumn (see *Look* magazine for the early winter, 1968–69) the one question that Pham Von Dong listened to most carefully without pronouncing himself was the possibility of American aid. Notice also that in the first week of September, a north Vietnamese economic mission visited Sweden and I think also other Scandinavian countries studying economic assistance prospects. One should not be surprised at more such developments in re France, western Europe generally and Japan. What the United States has to offer in this respect will weigh heavily in Hanoi, and President Nixon's reference in his address to the United Nations last Thursday could not have escaped Hanoi's scrutiny.

Bearing these guidelines in mind, what should be said of the immediate situation as of mid-September, 1969?

The Hanoi leadership has offered "private talks" to the United States while the public meetings in Paris go on, if the United States will make a demonstrative gesture with respect to troop withdrawals on the order of 100,000 men and will accept "the principle" of troop withdrawals aud move toward a rapid resolution of the issue, in something like one to five months.

This was the essence of the proposal made to me on September 1st for trans-

mission to Dr. Kissinger and it was followed one day later by breaking the matter to the press (as President Nixon noted in his UN speech) save for the idea of private talks.

I believe, as I stated at the outset and as I noted in a taped recording of all my conversations both in Paris, San Clemente and Washington this summer (taped for my private reference) this move for private talks and the apparent concessions involved in the acceptance of the "principle" of troop withdrawals instead of absolute and unconditional total withdrawal was a calculated move and it was timed with Ho's death but it would have been made in any case. It was timed with the resumption of post-summer U.S. political life, with the parleys at the United Nations, with the Sino-Soviet situation and with the latent crisis in Saigon.

The North Vietnamese objective seems fairly obvious: it is to advance the negotiations another stage and to make maximum use of them for the overall political objective.

With respect to American troop withdrawals, it is very interesting that Hanoi is no longer—at least in private—emphasizing the total and unconditional withdrawal of American forces, but only the American commitment to such a withdrawal as the price of private talks. This is not to say that Hanoi does not appreciate the demand within American life for complete and unilateral withdrawal. Nor is this to deny that in the long run the issue of a complete American withdrawal is not important, since in the eyes of Hanoi the sovereignty of the country involves the removal of a foreign military presence. But in the shorter run, what is important to Hanoi is not that all U.S. troops leave before anything can be negotiated but that enough troops leave so that negotiations can be justified and the political process be advanced. I mean by this that in the eyes of Hanoi the *process* of American withdrawal is all-important and the continued presence of American troops is not necessarily a handicap from their viewpoint. From what they are calculating, in my judgment, is that in the *process* of withdrawal the already-fragile and fundamentally weakened position of the Thieu-Ky government will be further weakened. At the same time the continued presence of U.S. troops provides a political rallying point for what they hope will be the ultimate constellation of a government capable of replacing the Thieu-Ky regime. Nothing will be as useful for the rallying of all nationalist elements in the South once there has been a political crack-up in Saigon as the presence of U.S. troops: the process of political victory and the consolidation of a regime they can live with will be fostered, in the eyes of Hanoi, if U.S. troops are confined to enclaves and asked to withdraw by a government of national coalition in which the South Vietnamese communists play an important, if not a leading role. Moreover, it must be assumed that Hanoi has by no means invested all its strategic reserves. Nor has the Viet Cong in the south used up its fighting power. In a war of this kind, it is vital for both the north and south Vietnamese communists to husband their manpower, to improve its fighting skills, as the U.S. military position changes with increasing withdrawal strategic forces must be available to confront the armed forces of the Saigon authorities and both to defeat them on the field and ultimately to absorb them into the armed forces of a government of national coalition.

Thus, what interests Hanoi is that the *process* of withdrawal shall have begun, but it does not necessarily have to be completed, and there are many advantages to a series of stages in which the issue remains alive and serves as a rallying point for accelerating the crack-up of the Saigon regime and basically weakening both the military and political position of the United States.

Based on this line of reasoning, the proposal of September 1st for private talks while public conferences go on—a proposal floated to the press the next day without spelling it out in so many words—must be taken very seriously. It makes serious sense once the political stage of the conflict is understood.

On the otber hand, this proposal has the merit, in the eyes of Hanoi, that it engages the United States essentially in bilateral negotiations. By this act it serves as a declaration to both Moscow and Peking that Hanoi is capable of handling its own negotiations and does not want the Vietnam issue mixed in with U.S.-Soviet and U.S.-Chinese relations. Hanoi is hoping that if the United States will negotiate seriously a rapid evolution of the situation is possible. Generally speaking, Hanoi has plenty of time and it would not ordinarily be averse to dragging out the peace negotiation so that the war becomes an issue in the next U.S. congressional elections, and even the next presidential elections. But in the new circumstances arising from serious prospects of general U.S.

negotiations with the major communist powers, Hanoi must be expected to try to separate its problems from those of its allies; this is essential if only to enhance its own bargaining position with them. If Moscow and/or Peking want to use the Vietnam situation as counters in their relations with Washington, Hanoi must be sure that a) it has either completed the negotiation with the U.S., or b) is on the verge of doing so or c) gets a *quid pro quo* from its "allies" of very real substance, basically significant economic aid as well as continued military supplies.

Since, once the position in Vietnam is no longer critical, the tendency in Moscow and Peking is to do less for Hanoi, the only way to balance this is to enhance Hanoi's independent position. Concretely this requires getting negotiations started. If Hanoi were unable to do this on its own, its position vis a vis its allied powers would be weaker.

This line of reasoning is not too dissimilar from that of Dr. Kissinger in last winter's *Foreign Affairs* piece in the sense that he, too, stresses all the new issues for the Soviet Union, mainly in Europe as a result of Czechoslovakia, which make the Vietnam issue recede. It is because the issue is receding within the "socialist camp" but not only because of the Soviet Union's European stakes but also because of the Sino-Soviet conflict as well as the possibilities of serious results with the Nixon administration that the men in Hanoi must be decided that the *process* of negotiating must be advanced and advanced now.

It will be noticed that from Hanoi's point of view, the readiness not to press for complete and immediate U.S. withdrawal, and the desire for rapid negotiations represents at one and the same time a compromise to make the process of negotiation easier for the United States and on the other hand a move which accelerates the weakening of the Saigon structure and facilitates a compromise government of some kind between the Provisional Revolutionary Government and those elements both inside and outside the present Saigon structure that will be inclined to become more willing to deal with the PRG as the negotiation progresses. For one of the most obvious gambits which Hanoi is pursuing is to place as intense a strain as possible on the present Saigon structure and if possible cause it to crack-up from within. The mere fact that the United States was obliged to admit the Viet Cong to the negotiating table alongside of is possible cause it to crack-up from within. The mere fact that the United States accepts the principle of withdrawal increases this strain. In my discussions with Xuan Thuy on September 1st it was perfectly clear that they understand—as indeed I argued—that once "private talks" get started this very action undermines the Saigon structure and if a discreet leak is made of the fact that such talks are going on, there may well be panic in Saigon. This is confirmed within the last ten days of General Ky's open admission that he is thinking of a military coup: the first victim of such a coup would, of course, be General Thieu and his friend, premier Kiem. But the contrifugal forces generated by such a coup would turn other Saigon politicians seriously toward negotiation with the PRG. The attractiveness of such a prospect simply underlines the seriousness of the proposal for "private talks" since there can only be a political gain from them. Whereas Hanoi undoubtedly has the consent of the PRG to engage in bi-lateral talks, as Xuan Thuy has now proposed, it is a question whether the United States can enforce a discipline upon the Saigonese authorities without an intense strain between Washington and Saigon—of which there is already much evidence—leadiug to a rupture within the Saigon structure.

It would be at the point of such a prospect, if it materialized that both the north and south Vietnamese Communists would be expected to use their strategic military reserves while at the same time offering the United States a compromise politically, a compromise that the United States would have to measure against its alternatives at that moment.

Unquestionably part of such a compromise would involve the stabilization of Laos and some agreement for long-range economic assistance from the Uulted States; for it would be in Hanoi's interest to involve the United States to the utmost in economic reconstruction and in supporting the ecouomic situation in the south. That Hanoi takes this seriously was clear in my own conversations with Xuan Thuy of July 26th. When President Nixon broached this as a real prospect in his address to the United Nations it could only have had a significant impact in Hanoi.

It is not, of course, the purpose of this paper to discuss the alternatives facing the United States in the light of what I have outlined above.

The American position is a difficult one, and it has been a difficult one from the outset and for someone like myself who believed at the outset that this was not only a wrong war, an unjust war but also a war that could not be won, it would not be fitting to try to work out policy-choices for U.S. policy-makers.

I do not believe there is any cheap and easy way out of this war, and I believe it is an illusion for the policy-makers of the present Administration to try to find a cheaper and easier way out of the war which was inherited from the Johnson administration by repeating the basic mistakes of that Administration. There is no point in trying to impose on Hanoi and the south Vietnamese communists a due-bill which properly should be debited to the previous American administration. The United States has for five years been trying to play poker whereas the Vietnamese have been playing chess—which is another kind of game. It follows from my outline of their probable moves that their chess-position is superior to the position of the Nixon administration and his superiority will NOT be reduced by trying to play poker—which is in any case another game.

The essential feature of chess is that the player tries to place his opponent in a posture wherein, no matter what moves he makes, he runs into "check"—loses.

The essential feature of poker is that if you do not have a good enough hand, you do not raise your bets and you are prepared to "pass". It does not work to overturn the table and reach for your gun. That makes for a shooting match but it does not solve the problem of a weak hand.

Whether the Vietnam situation is conceived as chess, or as poker, the United States position is not a strong one.

The United States has now been offered "private talks" and I do not see how it can refuse, but once it enters such talks I do not see how its position is going to be strengthened. Its real choice is to engage in these talks and try to reach a compromise, using its economic power to gain time for as graceful an exit from the political and military situation as possible, which in any case cannot be accomplished without a considerable price.

The United States could, by delay, stretch out the process of negotiations and ultimate withdrawal. And it could, by trying on its part to include Vietnam in negotiations with Moscow and Peking perhaps oblige Hanoi to make concessions. But I would judge from the behavior of foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, that the Soviet Union is not going to prove very accomodating, and I doubt that Chou En-lai will either.

It may therefore be in the American interest to negotiate seriously with Hanoi in private and to be prepared to pay the price of a war which could not be won. The price may turn out to be cheaper than has been anticipated, depending on the speed and earnestness of the negotiation. But there will be a price. Any other position is a continuation of the illusions which animated earlier policy-makers. Since they dumped the problem on the new Administration without making anything but a tacit self-criticism, the present Administration would do best in my judgement to accept the reality, to make the best of a difficult inheritance and avoid being placed in the posture of the Johnson administration.

If, as Lord Acton's famous phrase had it, absolute power corrupts absolutely it is also true that statesmen who do not have adequate power should avoid the ultimate corruption of trying to use inadequate power unwisely.

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