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THE VIETNAM POLICY REVERSAL
OF 1968

HON. WILLIAM F. RYAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 6, 1969

Mr. RYAN. Mr. Speaker, in March of 1968 the Johnson administration, after General Westmoreland's request for 206,000 additional men for Vietnam had resulted in an indepth reappraisal of the policy in Vietnam, concluded that it should embark upon a new course. That course culminated in the cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam on November 1 and, a few weeks later, in the commencement of peace negotiations in Paris.

A detailed story on the reversal of Vietnam policy in March 1968, appeared in the New York Times of March 6, 1968. I urge my colleagues to carefully study the basis for the policy reversal which that article documents. One year has now passed since the United States changed course in Vietnam. Yet the war rages on in undiminished fury. Every effort must be bent toward bringing about an immediate settlement of that conflict. The longer negotiations drag on, the greater the danger becomes that the Nixon administration may tragically and ill-advisedly return to already repudiated strategies of retaliation and escalation. The American people through the primaries of last spring repudiated those strategies. It is time the Government of the United States recognized the mandate to bring this tragic war to an end.

The New York Times article follows:

THE VIETNAM POLICY REVERSAL OF 1968

(NOTE.—This is the first of two articles written by Hedrick Smith in collaboration with William Beecher, and incorporating reports by Peter Grose, John W. Finney, E. W. Kenworthy, Roy Reed, Benjamin Welles, Edwin L. Dale Jr. and Max Frankel.)

WASHINGTON, March 5.—On the cold and cheerless early morning of Feb. 28, 1968, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, landed at Andrews Air Force Base after an urgent mission to Saigon. Pausing only to change into a fresh uniform, he hurried through the rain to the White House to deliver a report and make a request.

The report was designed to encourage an anxious President and his beleaguered advisers, but it served only to shock them into extended debate.

The request—for more troops—was designed to bring military victory at last in the eight-year American military effort, but it led instead to a fateful series of decisions that

of achieving this result are now available. What will be extinguished, in the absence of innovation, is the free society, the political community. Only if we can tear ourselves loose from our prejudices, from our ideology, from slogans, only if we can take a fresh look at the world and exercise the same kind of intelligence, character, and inventiveness that the Founding Fathers showed can we hope to revive, reconstruct, and preserve the political community.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Wyman-Gordon Company v. N.L.R.B., 397 F. 2d 394 (C.A. 1), cert. granted U.S. November 12, 1968.
2 N.L.R.B. (Tree Fruits Labor Relations Committee) v. Fruit & Vegetable Packers, Local 760, 377 U.S. 58, reversing 132 NLRB 1172.
3 Automobile Workers v. N.L.R.B. (General Motors Corporation), 381 F. 2d 265 (C.A. D.C.), reversing 158 NLRB 220.
4 Retail Clerks Union, Local 1179 v. N.L.R.B. (John P. Serpa, Inc.), 376 F. 2d 186 (C.A. 9), reversing 155 NLRB 99.
5 Construction, Production & Maintenance Union Local 383, AFL-CIO v. N.L.R.B. (Colson and Stevens Construction Co.), 323 F. 2d 422 (C.A. 9); Essex County and Vicinity District Council of Carpenters and Millrights, etc. v. N.L.R.B. (Associated Contractors of Essex County, Inc.), 332 F. 2d 686 (C.A. 3); Orange Belt District Council of Painters No. 48, AFL-CIO v. N.L.R.B. (Calmoun Drywall Co.), 328 F. 2d 534 (C.A. D.C.); Building and Construction Trades Council of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties v. N.L.R.B. (Gordon Fields), 328 F. 2d 540 (C.A. D.C.).
6 Woodworkers Local 3-10 v. N.L.R.B. (Long Lake Lumber Company), 380 F. 2d 628 (C.A. D.C.), modifying 160 NLRB 1475.
7 Steelworkers v. N.L.R.B. (H. K. Porter Co.), 389 F. 2d 295 (C.A. D.C.), remanding 153 NLRB 1370.

while New York State had over 500 percent more serious crimes than Mississippi during 1967.

Mr. Speaker, I take great pride in the enviable position Mississippi enjoys as the most law-abiding State in the Nation. This is a notable tribute to a people who place great emphasis on moral values and the rights of others.

I include at this point in the RECORD, portions of the Library of Congress index listing the five States with the lowest and highest crime rates in the Nation:

STATES WITH LOWEST CRIME RATES IN 1967

Table with 3 columns: State, Rate per 100,000, Percent change in crime rate 1966-67. Rows include Mississippi, North Dakota, West Virginia, New Hampshire, and Maine.

STATES WITH HIGHEST CRIME RATES

Table with 3 columns: State, Rate per 100,000, Percent change in crime rate. Rows include District of Columbia, California, New York, Nevada, and Maryland.

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THE PASSING OF PRIME MINISTER LEVI ESHKOL

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT N. GIAIMO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 26, 1969

Mr. GIAIMO. Mr. Speaker, we were all shocked and saddened by the sudden and untimely death of Prime Minister Levi Eshkol. I join with my colleagues in Congress, and men of good will everywhere in mourning the passing of this great statesman and respected world leader.

Prime Minister Eshkol devoted 60 years of his life to the service of his country. At the age of 13, Mr. Eshkol left his home in Eastern Europe and journeyed to Palestine in search of a new and better life. As he worked and learned and grew into manhood, his leadership abilities became apparent. Zionist leaders recognized these abilities and employed his talents in promoting a Jewish homeland both at home and abroad. He did his work well and was instrumental in the fulfillment of the age-old dream of a free and independent Jewish State of Israel. With independence a reality, he continued working untiringly to insure the success of Israel as a member of the world community.

Mr. Eshkol succeeded Prime Minister David Ben Gurion in 1963 and led the State of Israel through one of the most treacherous periods of its existence. During the 1967 crisis, Israel was threatened with annihilation by her enemies. His calm and courageous leadership gave strength to his people throughout the crisis and Israel was preserved.

MISSISSIPPI HAS LOWEST CRIME RATE IN NATION

HON. CHARLES H. GRIFFIN

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 6, 1969

Mr. GRIFFIN. Mr. Speaker, Mississippi had the lowest crime rate in the Nation in 1967, according to a revealing crime index report prepared by the Library of Congress, from the latest statistics available. The rate of serious offenses in Mississippi per 100,000 population was 574.9, or less than one-third the national average of 1,921.7. Furthermore, crime in Mississippi declined from the previous year by a greater percentage than in any other State.

These figures are of particular importance, in my opinion, because of the distorted accounts of conditions in Mississippi often conveyed to the rest of the Nation by the mass media, most of which is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and New York. These self-styled protectors of the public interest appear to take morbid delight in sensationalizing minor incidents in Mississippi which would not even have received passing mention had they occurred elsewhere. By encouraging irresponsible and biased reporting, the policymakers of the mass media have attempted to create a false impression of widespread lawlessness in my State. Accordingly, I invite their attention to the fact that Washington's crime rate exceeded that of Mississippi by 850 percent

Mr. Rostow and General Taylor, who had gone to Vietnam early in 1961 as President Kennedy's personal envoys and who came back advocating intervention, were even more opposed to "letting up the pressure." Mr. Rostow, athletic and ebullient, funneled the news from Saigon to the President.

The advocates of change were Messrs. Nitze, Warnke, and Katzenbach, and later—most powerfully—Mr. Clifford. Mr. Helms, thoughtful and angular, was neutral on policy questions. The weight of his C.I.A. analysis called into question military judgments, past strategy and the quest for victory implicit in so many earlier decisions.

Although Mr. Clifford was never alone, his eventual role was remarkable because it was wholly unexpected.

He came into government with a reputation as a hawk, as a trusted, loyal "back-room" counselor to Mr. Johnson who had steadfastly supported Administration policy. In December, 1965, he had opposed the 36-day bombing pause then advocated by his predecessor. One man acquainted with the circumstances of the Clifford appointment said later:

"I am sure the President felt, 'Here is a good, strong, sturdy supporter of the war, and that's what I need.' Mr. McNamara was wobbling—particularly on the bombing issue. I think the President felt Clifford was strong and sturdy."

But Mr. Clifford had begun to have doubts during a trip in August, 1967, to Vietnam and allied countries contributing troops to the war. On his return he confided to the President that he was deeply uneasy at having discovered that the American view of the war was not fully shared by Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and the Philippines.

Disturbed he was, but he remained a supporter of Administration policy. He was encouraged by secret diplomatic efforts in August, 1967, and again in January, 1968, to get negotiations with Hanoi started on the basis of the so-called San Antonio formula.

That proposal, made public by President Johnson in a speech in the Texas city on September 30, 1967, offered to halt the bombing of North Vietnam provided it would lead promptly to productive talks and "assuming" that Hanoi would not take military advantage of the cessation.

At Mr. Clifford's Senate confirmation hearings on Jan. 25, 1968, he had added the important interpretation that this meant that the President would tolerate "normal" levels of infiltration from North to South Vietnam.

The president had not cleared Mr. Clifford's remarks in advance and, as a result according to one informed source, "all hell broke loose at the White House and the State Department."

Secretary Rusk was said to have argued for two days with President Johnson against giving Administration endorsement to the interpretation. He was overruled. On Jan. 29 the State Department said Mr. Clifford's remarks represented United States policy.

He plunged into the minutiae of Vietnam like a lawyer taking a new case. He had private talks with Mr. McNamara, whose own misgivings had sharpened in his final months at the Pentagon.

As a newcomer with limited knowledge, Mr. Clifford had to rely on civilian subordinates more than had his brilliant and experienced predecessor. The large faction of dissenters from Administration policy was quick to seize the opportunity to press its views. The Tet offensive, recalled one dissenter, "gave us something we could hand our arguments on, something to contradict the beguiling upward curve on the progress charts" from Saigon.

With the lid off, the new Secretary discovered a nest of "hidden doves" at the Pentagon, including his deputy, Mr. Nitze; Assistant Secretaries Warnke, Alain C. Enthoven, Goulding and Alfred B. Fitt; the Under Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air

Force—David E. McGiffert, Charles F. Baird and Townsend W. Hoopes; a few younger generals and colonels and a score of young civilians brought in by Mr. McNamara, principally Dr. Morton H. Halperin, Dr. Les Gelb and Richard C. Steadman.

The men who clearly had the greatest impact on the new Secretary's thinking were Messrs. Nitze, Warnke and Goulding—perhaps Mr. Warnke more than the others.

"Warnke was deeply upset about Vietnam and he was persuasive," a colleague said. "His style and Mr. Clifford's meshed." As a measure of their mutual confidence, Mr. Clifford chose Mr. Warnke as a law partner when both left the Government.

When the Clifford task force got under way, a number of officials took the troop request as evidence of panic on General Westmoreland's part. But ranking officers who were in Saigon headquarters during and after the Tet offensive assert that there was no thought of asking for many more troops until shortly before General Wheeler's visit late in February.

"The President asked General Wheeler to go out to Vietnam to find out what General Westmoreland thought he could use," a Pentagon official said. Civilian officials were irritated by this approach. "It was a mistake to ask a damned-fool question like that," a State Department official remarked.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had their own reasons for favoring a massive increase and a reserve call-up. For months they had been deeply concerned that the strategic reserve had been dangerously depleted and they had been looking for a chance to reconstitute it by persuading the President to mobilize National Guard units.

Another view was held by Ambassador Bunker, who never fully endorsed the troop request and who wanted first priority for re-equipping and expanding the South Vietnamese Army—a suggestion endorsed by Pentagon civilians.

The Wheeler-Westmoreland plan presented to the task force called for 206,000 men by June 30, 1969—roughly 100,000 within a few months and two later increments of about 50,000 men each. The first segment was to come from available active-duty units in the United States; the rest were to come from the reserves.

In the view of the Joint Chiefs, only the full number would assure victory. The implication was that with 206,000 more men, the war would "not be terribly long," as one Pentagon civilian put it—but there was no precise forecast.

At this point Mr. Warnke, in his nasal Massachusetts accent, read a C.I.A. paper that challenged the military thesis head on. Hanoi, he said, would match American reinforcements as it had in the past, and the result would simply be escalation and "a lot more killing" on both sides.

Besides, the task force was told, the financial costs would be immense. The proposed scale of reinforcements would add nearly \$10-billion to a war already costing \$30-billion a year.

As an alternative, Mr. Warnke urged a turn toward deescalation—a pullback from General Westmoreland's aggressive search-and-destroy tactics and the abandonment of isolated outposts like the besieged Marine garrison at Khesanh. He said that American forces should be used as a mobile shield in and around population centers and that more should be demanded from the South Vietnamese Army.

The sheer complexity of the troop issue began to raise doubts in Mr. Clifford's mind.

QUESTIONS OTHERS AVOIDED

"Part of it was Clark's intelligent questioning and part of it was his naiveté," a colleague recalled. "He asked about things that others more familiar with the details would not have asked.

"He just couldn't get the figures straight

on troops. He drove Bus Wheeler mad. He would say, 'Now I understand you wanted 22,000 men for such and such,' and Wheeler would point out this didn't include the support elements, and if you added them, it would be 35,000 in all."

"This happened again and again every time Clark wanted to get the numbers down as low as possible, and it had a psychological impact on him," the source added.

The first weekend in March was consumed by a study of the papers drafted for the task force and by questions. "It was meet all day, sandwiches in for lunch, sandwiches in for dinner," a participant recalled.

Word was passed to President Johnson that the review "wasn't going well" and had hit a "discordant note." But Mr. Clifford's doubts had not hardened into convictions by the time he handed the President his first report on March 5.

A short, unsigned, four-or-five-page memorandum, it recommended giving General Westmoreland 50,000 more troops in the next three months and set out a schedule for reducing the rest of the 206,000 men for dispatch over the next 15 months.

FROM DIVERGENT POINTS OF VIEW

Characteristically, the President's advisers disagreed on the recommendation's significance. The Pentagon saw it as a move "to get the pipeline going"—general approval of the troop request; State Department officials viewed it as part of a process of "whittling down" the 206,000 figure.

Although Mr. Clifford had passed along the report, he was uneasy about it. He was worried that if the President approved the first batch of troops, that action would move him irrevocably toward the whole 206,000. But the Secretary did not challenge the report directly; he tried to stall, suggesting that the task force check General Westmoreland's reaction to be sure the "mix" of forces was right.

General Wheeler wanted to move ahead, but others, including Mr. Rusk and Mr. Rostow, were willing to have the issue studied further, so the task force carried on for several more days.

This seemed to suit Mr. Johnson's mood, too. His instinct, a White House aide explained later, was to delay implementing the plan. "He kept putting off making an initial decision," the aide said.

For the President had heard the grumbles in Congress over the danger to the dollar from the gold drain and from the rising costs of the war. Politicians were alarmed by the size of the troop request.

Old, trusted friends like Senator Richard B. Russell, the Georgia Democrat who headed the Armed Services Committee, were complaining tartly about General Westmoreland. Influential men like Senator John Stennis, the Mississippi Democrat, were privately warning the President to go slow on mobilizing reserves.

As the task force persisted, Secretary Clifford himself was putting more pointed questions. "What is our military plan for victory?" he asked. "How will we end the war?" He was not satisfied.

Then the bombing campaign came under his scrutiny. Mr. Hoopes wrote him a memorandum urging a halt, arguing that the bombing was not having significant results and that, because of Soviet and Chinese Communist aid, North Vietnam had become "on balance a stronger military power today than before the bombing began."

Mr. Hoopes contended that it was "a military fiction" that American combat casualties were halted. American losses, he said, were primarily a result of the aggressive ground strategy in the South.

Under the impact of such arguments, Mr. Clifford's doubts became convictions. He supported the President's previous restrictions on the war—no invasion of North Vietnam, no expansion of the ground war into Laos

or Cambodia, no mining of the Haiphong harbor—and he became convinced that within those restrictions there was no military answer. He began the search for a path to disengagement.

The debate, by now in the White House, ceased through the middle of March. At this time, Mr. Clifford began to state his case for a fundamental change in American policy: It was time to emphasize peace, not a larger war.

He now challenged the task-force recommendation for more troops. "This isn't the way to go at all," he told the President. "This is all wrong."

HIS WORDS CARRIED WEIGHT

With the nation bitterly divided over the war and in desperate need at home, he maintained, it would be immoral to consider enormous added investment in Vietnam—a "military sinkhole."

His outspoken challenge was deeply disturbing to President Johnson, who always preferred a consensus among his close advisers. Although he never turned his celebrated temper on Mr. Clifford, the argument chilled their personal relations and left the Defense Secretary, a friend for 30 years, feeling oddly frozen out of the White House at times.

Secretary Rusk apparently did not disagree with Mr. Clifford so sharply on troop numbers, but he was opposed to the long-run implications of Mr. Clifford's arguments—that in the end, the United States would have to settle for less. Mr. Rostow felt that the new Defense Secretary had fallen under the influence of "the professional pessimists" in the Defense Department.

At the Pentagon morale was rising among civilian advocates of a new policy. "We used to ask," a former Pentagon civilian said of the Secretary, "is he one of us? Well, there was 'one of us' at the White House." He was Harry McPherson, the President's speech drafter, who, unknown to the Pentagon or the State Department, was already at work on a major Vietnam speech. The final version was Mr. Johnson's address to the nation on Sunday, March 31.

FIRST A PLEA FOR A STIFFER STAND

The speech was originally conceived late in February on the basis of Mr. Rostow's analysis that the Tet offensive had not been a real setback and that the allies should pull up their socks and hang on until the enemy came to his senses. While discussions of troop strength were proceeding, Mr. McPherson was developing his draft.

Initially, it included an opened-ended commitment to the war—a willingness to carry on at whatever the cost. But as the internal debate over troop figures raged on and the numbers dwindled down to 50,000 and the tone softened. But the President would not commit himself to any draft or any figure.

Then came a series of signal events: Senator Eugene J. McCarthy scored a stunning upset in the New Hampshire Democratic primary on March 1. American dead and wounded in Vietnam reached 139,801—exceeding over-all Korean-war losses. American and Western European bankers held an emergency meeting in Washington to stem the run of gold as the price soared. Senator Robert F. Kennedy announced on March 16 that he would seek the Democratic Presidential nomination.

All this formed the backdrop for the most delicate argument of all—that about the bombing.

On March 15, Arthur J. Goldberg, the American representative at the United Nations, sent an eight-page memo to the President urging him to halt the bombing to get negotiations started.

Others in the Administration favored such a step—Mr. Katzenbach and Ambassador-at-Large W. Averell Harriman, among them—but it was Ambassador Goldberg, increasingly

frustrated by his sense of powerlessness on the Vietnam issue, who dared brook the President's anger by raising the issue directly.

Few officials knew he had done so. He drafted the memo himself and sent it labeled "For the President's Eyes Only." Copies were given to Secretaries Rusk and Clifford, and Mr. Rostow, as the President's aide, saw it in due course, but Mr. Goldberg discussed it with none of them.

Still others, including Assistant Secretary of State Bundy, favored waiting for several weeks on the ground that another enemy offensive might be near.

A day after the Goldberg memo arrived, the subject came up in Mr. Johnson's inner circle. The President, his patience sorely tested, sat up in his chair and said:

"Let's get one thing clear! I'm telling you now I am not going to stop the bombing. Now I don't want to hear any more about it. Goldberg has written me about the whole thing, and I've heard every argument. I'm not going to stop it. Now is there anybody here who doesn't understand that?"

There was dead silence.

The bombing issue was dropped at that meeting, but it was not dead. Mr. Clifford, the lawyer, had noticed a loophole.

JOHNSON'S POLLY, UTAH

HON. LAURENCE J. BURTON

OF UTAH

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 6, 1969

Mr. BURTON of Utah. Mr. Speaker, on his last day in office, by the stroke of a pen, President Johnson expanded Capitol Reef and Arches National Monuments in Utah by 215,000 and 49,000 acres, respectively. This action was accomplished through issuance of two proclamations. It was done without prior consultation with Members of Congress from Utah, State officials, or people in the area who might be adversely affected by the monument extensions. This, in my judgment, was completely wrong. There should have been advance notice; there should have been public hearings; there should have been consultation. But, unfortunately, neither the President nor Secretary Udall considered this important.

I think it fundamental that the work of Government, particularly when it directly affects the economic livelihood of the people it governs, should not be conducted in secret except in those relatively rare cases where the security of the Nation is at stake. There was no justification for clandestine action in this case. What was done here should have been done in the light, not the dark. It frequently happens that when people act furtively, they do so because they expect their acts will not be favored by the public. This must have been the case in this instance. Certainly the "land grab" has not set well with the people who live in the area adjacent to the monuments.

The following article, which appeared in the February issue of the Utah Cattleman, explains their point of view:

THE STORY OF BOULDER, UTAH: IT WAS A NICE LITTLE TOWN

Boulder, Utah, a town with a listed population of 108 people, is nestled in the border area of the Dixie National Forest of Garfield County, and used to be about 25 miles south of the Capitol Reef National Monument. That is correct, used to be. With the final decision of Lyndon B. Johnson, and his participant Udall, concerning this bit of beauty in

Utah, the area was expanded by 255,000 acres, and they find themselves much closer to it.

In this community, as in others of the west, the main economic resource is cattle raising. Almost without exception, the welfare of everyone in the town depends on this industry. What has happened to them is without a doubt a real catastrophe. It is easy for newspaper editors to sit in an easy chair somewhere in the east, or at least east of Utah, and write glowing phrases about the glorious past of LBJ and Udall when it comes to conservation. They do not know the facts, and apparently don't wish to find them out. What they can't realize is a lot of difference between conservation and preservation reserves these acreages for a very small percentage of our population.

If this decision is allowed to stand it appears the cattle business will be extinct in this section of the country. Homes and buildings will go by the wayside. Huge investments will go the way of grazing permits. It is a sorry picture. Bankruptcy is something that has hung over the heads of many livestock operators for years, but bankruptcy by presidential decree is a bitter pill to swallow, and this is what has occurred.

In light of all this the Town Board of this community has signed a resolution and sent it to Secretary of State Clyde Miller, as follows:

"RESOLUTION MADE BY THE BOULDER TOWN BOARD ON JANUARY 21, 1969, AT BOULDER, UTAH

"Whereas the town of Boulder was established as a home site and farm area as an adjunct to livestock operations which are highly dependent upon Federal range. The last official act of President Johnson, withdrawing a principal part of the grazing land for the town of Boulder, has sounded the death knell for our community.

"Whereas our many visitors to the valley have been surprised and impressed with the emerald greenness of our Boulder Valley which suddenly appears to the visitor as a beautiful green oasis surrounded by sandstone hills. These visitors have accepted this greenness as a natural phenomenon of nature when, in fact, it is the result of large scale investment in time and money by the livestock operators of the valley. The "rule by decree" of President Johnson has destroyed the economic justification for our valley's farming operation since distance to markets and other economic factors rule out profitable farming except in support of livestock range operations.

"Whereas while the name of Boulder, Utah has a special meaning in the true western traditions of livestock operations we, the community members do not wish to see the death of our valley occur under the name of Boulder and therefore officially change the name of this town to a more appropriate one: Therefore, be it

"Resolved, That in commemoration of President Johnson's parting gift to the American people the new name for our valley will be *Johnson's Polly, Utah*."

To these people we offer our congratulations, our sympathy, and our promise to do everything in our power to have this ruling reviewed, and if possible, rescinded.

Those who say it can't happen here, or it can't happen to me had better talk to some of those people in Boulder. They know!

BLACK SECESSIONIST UNIVERSITY

HON. JOHN R. PARICK

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 6, 1969

Mr. PARICK. Mr. Speaker, Congress last year appropriated the money to