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STATEMENTS OF ASIAN GOVERNMENT LEADERS ON VIETNAM WAR

March 1968

HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR ON MICROFILM

# VIET-NAM

## INFORMATION NOTES

OFFICE OF MEDIA SERVICES, BUREAU OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
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## OPINIONS OF ASIAN AND PACIFIC LEADERS

"There is dangerous thinking in the West . . . progressives of the West believe that Communism will win and the best that they can do is surrender peaceably to it . . . they are free to expound their ideas from remote positions. But there are millions of people in Southeast Asia and 450 million people of India who, in spite of the basic defects in the structure of their society, will not permit themselves to be traded in the drawing rooms and cabinets of the Western world . . .

"If America compromises on this vital issue of freedom in Asia, she will have to pay the price dearly. . . It is alarming that [responsible commentators] of the West should talk so lightheartedly about leaving India's eastern flank open to the dangers of Chinese invasion.

"[The] counsel of retreat to the West is certainly not what Asians want. We want and need the presence of the West on Asia's land and sea. The West can provide the power to balance Communist China until such a time as democratic nations like India and Japan can provide it."

Rajmohan Gandhi  
Editor of Himmat Magazine  
February 1965

In any evaluation of the issues in Viet-Nam, the attitudes of the countries of the Asia/Pacific area must clearly be an important consideration. These countries are best informed about conditions in the area, are most keenly aware of the stakes, and their leaders have stated their views.

Obviously, opinions differ among Asian leaders on various points of policy. There are both optimistic and pessimistic interpretations of almost every development in the Vietnamese war. But, on the central issue—the fundamental commitment of the United States to the defense of South Viet-Nam—there is overwhelming support from the leaders of the region for the American policy. This support comes not only from countries allied with South Viet-Nam and the United States, but also from most of the uncommitted countries. Nor is that support limited to government leaders. The statement quoted above of Rajmohan Gandhi, editor of

Himmat Magazine, while not offered as representative of official Indian views, is an example of a large body of unofficial opinion among Asians.

This pamphlet presents some representative samples of Asian views on the following principal aspects of the problem:

1. The basic U.S. commitment.
2. The nature of the war—civil war, or aggression?
3. North Vietnamese involvement.
4. Chinese involvement.
5. The threat to neighboring countries.
6. U.S. bombing policy.
7. Peace efforts.
8. Regional goals beyond the war.

### BASIC U.S. COMMITMENT

Among non-Communist Asians in positions of responsibility, the commitment of the United States to help free Asians resist Communist expansion is widely approved. Even Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia, whose views on Viet-Nam are well known, has increasingly expressed his concern about developments in Viet-Nam which could present a Communist threat to his own country. Support of the U.S. commitment is expressed not only by those leaders whose nations are



Lieutenant General Lewis W. Walt confers with a U.S. Marine company commander during combat operations in South Viet-Nam.

military allies of the United States and South Viet-Nam, but by leaders of most neutral countries in the area as well. For example:

—Prince Souvanna Phouma, Prime Minister of Laos, in an interview published in U.S. News and World Report, November 6, 1967:

Q. "Some critics of the war say the United States should pull out of South Vietnam. As the Premier of Laos, which has borders with both South and North Vietnam, what do you think would be the effect of such a withdrawal?"

A. "There would be a danger for the countries of East Asia—a very great danger.

"Right now, South Vietnam alone cannot face the danger of the North. Thus, if the Americans and the allies leave tomorrow, South Vietnam would be Communist.

"Should South Vietnam become Communist—that is to say, should all of Vietnam become Communist—it would be difficult for Laos to exist. The same goes for Cambodia, the same for other countries.

"I have always said that if all of Vietnam becomes Communist, we could do nothing but pack our bags and leave."

—Eisaku Sato, Premier of Japan, November 14, 1967:

"I wish to express my deep respect to you, Mr. President [Johnson], for the great efforts being made by the United States under your able leadership to bring peace and stability to the world, particularly in Asia at this moment."

—Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore, addressing a meeting of the University of Singapore Democratic Socialist Club, June 15, 1966. (From transcript distributed by Singapore Government, June 22, 1966):

"Do you believe that the Indians are stooges and lackeys of the Americans?... There are the Burmese—they are the best neutralists in Asia. How is it that none of them have really said that 'this is a crime against humanity committed by the Americans'? Of course! Hundreds of Vietnamese are dying every day—for what? For Viet-Nam? No! To decide that Viet-Nam shall not be repeated. That is why they haven't raised their voice in protest with the same indignation and rage. But whilst we buy time, if we just sit down and believe people are going to buy time

forever after for us, then we deserve to perish."

## CIVIL WAR OR AGGRESSION

Another point on which there is wide agreement in Asia is the nature of the war in Viet-Nam:

—Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos, Manila, 1966:

"It is established beyond dispute that the war in Viet-Nam is not a civil war. It is a war on an international scale involving massive aggression from Communist North Viet-Nam with the active encouragement of Communist China."



The Manila Conference in October, 1966, brought together seven allied leaders of the Asia-Pacific area to establish a common policy on the war in South Viet-Nam. Here President Marcos of the Philippines addresses the conference.

—Thailand Premier Thanom Kittikachorn, Manila, 1966:

"Even though the war in Viet-Nam is being fought mainly between peoples of the same race, it is in no way a civil war... North Viet-Nam is waging an imperialistic war of Communist expansion not only in South Viet-Nam but also in other parts of Southeast Asia as well...."

—Korean President Pak Chung Hui, Korea, 1966:

"The forces which support and control the Viet Cong in Free Viet-Nam today are the same forces which 16 years ago supported and controlled the southward aggression of the Communist troops in Korea... the situation in Viet-Nam is more than a simple domestic problem of that country. It represents rather a confrontation of the free world with Communist tyranny."

## NORTH VIETNAMESE INVOLVEMENT

North Vietnamese involvement in the war in South Viet-Nam is regarded among Asian and Pacific leaders as a long-established fact, as the statements cited above illustrate. As long ago as 1962 the International Control Commission reported that "there is sufficient evidence to show beyond reasonable doubt" that the North Vietnamese Army was conducting hostile operations against South Viet-Nam in clear violation of the Geneva accords. Since that time, Asian leaders have charged that North Vietnamese forces have also conducted offensive operations against neutral Laos and are training and equipping guerrillas in Thailand. Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia also has commented on North Vietnamese operations in Cambodia.

—Prime Minister of Laos, Prince Souvanna Phouma, November 2, 1967:

"We were fully satisfied with the [1962] Geneva accords. We thought that the nightmare of internal subversion and foreign aggression was over. But, alas, our people were grievously deceived. The accords were immediately and shamelessly violated . . . the Pathet Lao . . . , valet of the Hanoi Government, continued its sabotage. War, instead of stopping, grew more intense. Today, five years after the signature of the Geneva accords, we can count about 40,000 North Vietnamese soldiers in our territory. They are fighting beside 15,000 Pathet Lao, armed, paid, trained and encadred by North Viet-Nam. Development of our country is paralyzed. Thousands of refugees stream into Governmental zones. Hundreds of villages are abandoned. Only half of the soil is cultivated. The Ho Chi Minh trail has become an active transit route for North Vietnamese forces. . . . But, the most distressing aspect is to think that this useless, bloody, tragedy could not have occurred if some ideological, greedy nations had not come and interfered directly or indirectly in our internal affairs. By what right, what moral, do they assume the right to 'liberate' us?"

—Foreign Minister of Thailand, Thanat Khoman, April 20, 1967, the "Today" show.

Q. "The war that's going on now in the northeast provinces of your country, where is the direction for this insurrection coming from, Peking or Hanoi, or, perhaps, Moscow?"

Foreign Minister Thanat: "Oh, I think, from both. You see, in general when it is the question of—of instigating troubles, and disorders, and insurrection in non-



North Vietnamese army regulars, captured by the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division, are interrogated by a "sky trooper."

Communist countries, Communist powers generally join hands.

"But, I would say without hesitation that, at the present time, direction, and support, and training, and equipment are coming primarily from North Viet-Nam, and also from Communist China."

—Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia, May 9, 1967:

"They launched these attacks because they want to create civil war. . . .

"If we fail in our operations against them and if the Khmer [Cambodian] Viet Minh emerge victorious, they can transform the nation into a Communist country. If not they must continue to accept independence and neutrality . . . .

"The masters of the Khmer Viet Minh are the Viet Minh and the Viet Cong."

—Malaysian Minister of Home Affairs and Acting Foreign Minister Tun Dr. Ismail bin Dato Abdul Rahman, Lahore Bahru, 1966:

"I do not intend to make an anti-Communist speech. But I feel it is useful to stress that it is not South Viet-Nam which seeks to annex North Viet-Nam, but vice versa. This has been officially admitted by Hanoi, and Peking is giving Hanoi every encouragement. Peking's and Hanoi's involvement in the Communist offensive in Laos is also well known. And since early last year, Peking has repeatedly threatened Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore with so-called People's Wars to be launched by

local Communist movements against these three countries. . . ."

—Ambassador of the Republic of China to the United Nations, Mr. Liu Chieh, October 12, 1966:

"What is happening in Viet-Nam is not a local rebellion caused by internal discontent. It is a war of aggression conducted from across the northern border of the Republic of Viet-Nam. The Viet Cong guerrillas are the creatures of Hanoi. They are trained, armed, supplied and directed by the Communist North with the support of Peiping. Their mission is to destroy the Republic of Viet-Nam's will to resist, to erode its faith in the future, to paralyze its social, economic and political progress."

In an interview with Associated Press, 1966, Lao Premier Prince Souvanna Phouma said:

"North Viet-Nam has never respected the 1962 Geneva agreements. Even during the conference, the Pathet Lao denied the presence in Laos of troops from North Viet-Nam. But we were there also and we know positively that there were Vietnamese units with the Pathet Lao. After the signing of the Geneva agreements, they were still there in flagrant violation of the terms of the agreements."

#### INVOLVEMENT OF COMMUNIST CHINA

The war in South Viet-Nam is regarded by most Asian and Pacific leaders as part of the larger struggle against domination by Communist China of all Southeast Asia. They realize the outcome of the conflict in Viet-Nam is likely to have an important effect on the intentions of Communist China and North Viet-Nam toward other countries in the area. For example:

—Tun Dr. Ismail bin Dato Abdul Rahman, Minister of Home Affairs and Acting Foreign Minister of Malaysia, Jahore Bahru, June 23, 1966:

"The power vacuum left over from the retreat of western colonial rule still poses a grave threat to the independence of Southeast Asian states. . . .

"This vacuum has not been filled by the growth and consolidation of indigenous power. On the contrary, taking advantage of the situation, a giant outside power, the People's Republic of China, seems bent on a long-range program of expanding its



HANOI parade poster shows Ho Chi Minh shaking hands with one of his principal supporters, Party Chairman Mao Tse-tung, of Communist China.

power and influence through its proxies in Southeast Asia. . . .

"We do not oppose the Communist system in Mainland China, so long as it confines itself within its own borders. But we call upon the People's Republic of China to keep its hands off our region and to adopt a policy of peaceful co-existence towards its fellow Asians in Southeast Asia."

—Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew—"Meet the Press," October 22, 1967:

Q. "Can you make an estimate or a guess as to the future of China? Do you think in the near future it will become again a unified country, a strongly unified country that might represent some kind of a danger to Southeast Asia?"

Mr. Lee: ". . . I don't believe . . . the simple theory that they are just going to send their armies across and eat up Southeast Asia. It is too simple, and it is too simple for you, for the Americans, and for us, because then it is naked aggression; the whole of Southeast Asia will jell together and meet an incoming invader. But you have this 'make it yourself' kind of revolution. Wars of national liberation, you know. Here is the text. 'We have an instructor. He will teach you how to organize and will slip you a few guns and more if necessary and, if it gets more difficult, well, surface-to-air missiles and so on.'"

—President Ferdinand E. Marcos, Republic of the Philippines, September 15, 1966:

" . . . for the present and the years ahead, Communist China's neighbors cannot expect, singly or together, to 'balance'

China's crucial margin of nuclear power without the assistance of non-Asian countries like America. There is in consequence a new disposition to regard America's deterrent power in Asia as a necessity for the duration of time required by the Asian nations to develop their own system of regional security supported by what they hope would have become a greatly strengthened United Nations."

—Joint Communiqué issued by Prime Minister Eisaku Sato of Japan and President Johnson, November 15, 1967:

"The President and the Prime Minister exchanged frank views on the recent international situation, with particular emphasis on developments in the Far East. They noted the fact that Communist China is developing its nuclear arsenal and agreed on the importance of creating conditions wherein Asian nations would not be susceptible to threats from Communist China. The President and the Prime Minister also agreed that, while it is difficult to predict at present what external posture Communist China may eventually assume, it is essential for the free world countries to continue to cooperate among themselves to promote political stability and economic prosperity in the area. Looking toward an enduring peace in Asia, they further expressed the hope that Communist China would ultimately cast aside its present intransigent attitude and seek to live in peace and prosper alongside other nations in the international community."

#### THREAT TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

Asian and Pacific leaders recognize that it is easier to wage the new forms of massive politico-military warfare if the aggressor can stage his operations out of territory adjacent to the target country. Obviously, it would be easier for Communists to develop a "war of national liberation" against Thailand and Malaysia, for example, if they first control the Indochinese peninsula. As each country falls, it becomes the staging area for politico-military aggression against the next:

—Singapore Premier Lee Kuan Yew, May 6, 1965:

"If the Communists are able to advance their frontiers to envelop South Viet-Nam it will be only a matter of time before the same process of emasculation by military and political techniques will overtake the neighboring countries."

—Thai Government announcement, January 3, 1967:

"Thailand is situated near Viet-Nam and it will be the next target of the Communists, as they have already proclaimed. This is why Thailand realizes the necessity to send military units to help oppose Communist aggression [in Viet-Nam] when it is still at a distance from our country."

—Prime Minister Keith Holyoake of New Zealand, July 23, 1966:

"The present war in Viet-Nam is a wretched example of the waste of human life and much needed resources which is likely to be repeated if we cannot persuade the Asian Communist powers that aggression will not be allowed to succeed. That is why the struggle in Viet-Nam is of such critical importance. If the North Vietnamese were to succeed in their attempt to subjugate South Viet-Nam, the stage would be set for a series of further Communist encroachments."

—President Pak Chung Hui of Korea, June 25, 1966:

"Unless the superior combined forces of the free world succeed in defeating the aggressive scheme of the Communists there [in Viet-Nam], the chances for the systematic Communist aggression of our neighboring Asian states are sure to become greater. The ceaseless aggressive maneuver of the Communists of the last twenty years, and their recent pronouncements of a provocative nature, are eloquent proofs of their continued aggressive intention."

—The late Prime Minister Harold Holt of Australia, January 12, 1967:

"But for massive and effective military and civil assistance from friendly countries outside the region, the countries of Southeast Asia would either have to carry a crippling defense burden, frustrating to their plans of development and social improvement, or live under constant threat of external danger or internal subversion and terrorism. The free countries of this region want the Western world to know that we regard the contribution made in particular by the United States to the security and progress of this area as fundamental to our prospects of security and national growth."

—Narciso Ramos, Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs, before the U.N. General Assembly, September 25, 1967:

"Of the gravest concern to us is the situation in Viet-Nam. We are concerned not merely because of the geographic proximity of the Philippines to that country but because that land has become the testing-ground for the free world's determination to resist acts of subversion and aggression masquerading as wars of national liberation. The triumph of Hanoi and the Viet Cong in South Viet-Nam would mean that movements of the same nature could with impunity be started anywhere in the world and pursued to success. It would give a new and more dangerous dimension to subversion and aggression, and no country anywhere would be immune. In the interest of our own national survival we do not wish to see this happen."

—Cambodian Chief of State Prince Norodom Sihanouk, May 9, 1967:

"Concerning the Communists, dear companions, we say that we trust the Chinese and Vietnamese. But when the moment comes what will happen between us and the Vietnamese?"

"I must tell you that the Vietnamese Communists and the Viet Cong negotiated with us three or four times but that absolutely nothing comes out of the negotiations. They did not sign a pledge of respect for our present frontiers. That is the first problem. The second problem is the fact that the pro-Viet Minh Khmer [Cambodians] have had the habit of permitting the Viet Minh to come into our country. Formerly, after I had expelled the French and after the French troops left Cambodia, the Viet Minh remained in our country in order to conquer it. How can we have confidence in the Viet Minh? Will we be able to escape falling into their hands once we turn Communist?"

"...If we side with the Viet Minh, we will lose our independence..."

#### U.S. BOMBING POLICY

While there is overwhelming support among Asian and Pacific leaders for the basic U.S. commitment, some of our East Asian and Pacific friends have urged the President to try once again a suspension of the bombing; on the other hand, a few have urged wider bombing.

U.S. policy has been to bomb only to the extent believed necessary to impede the flow of men and materiel from the North to the



*Wearing G-suits, pilots of the attack aircraft carrier U.S.S. Coral Sea prepare to take off for a mission over North Viet-Nam.*

South. The President, at San Antonio on September 29, 1967, said: "The United States is willing to stop all aerial and naval bombardment of North Viet-Nam when this will lead promptly to productive discussions. We, of course, assume that while discussions proceed, North Viet-Nam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation or limitation." The absence of any indication of willingness by Hanoi to restrict its own military effort if bombing were halted leaves the United States facing a difficult choice, as regional opinions illustrate:

—Japanese Foreign Minister Takeo Miki, 1967:

"I do not subscribe to the thought that if the United States would only stop bombing, something may come of it. It is not that simple...."

"There are some who say try it anyway. Even if you might be fooled. These advocate that if, after waiting three or four weeks, North Viet-Nam does not reduce its scale of fighting, or shows no willingness to come to the conference table, then resume the bombing of the North...."

"There are some Americans who hold this view...."

"But, I believe that to do so is a dangerous gamble. I feel this way because this line of reasoning contains the risk of further escalating the war."

—New Zealand Prime Minister, Keith Holyoake, November 27, 1967:

"...while the Government accepts the military necessity for the bombing of military targets in North Viet-Nam, we have always been anxious to work toward a mutual

scaling down of military activities in Viet-Nam. We have always recognized that another suspension of the bombing could be an important step in this process. It is well known that the United States Government is ready to stop the bombing the moment North Viet-Nam gives a reliable sign that it is prepared to undertake some reciprocal step to reduce its military activity in the South or to make some meaningful advance toward a political settlement. This, however, the North Vietnamese Government has consistently refused to do."

## PEACE EFFORTS

The great range and variety of peace efforts is described in detail in Viet-Nam Information Note No. 2. All these efforts, whether initiated by the United States or interested third parties, have collapsed due to Communist intransigence. The core of the problem is examined in these Asian statements:

—Indian President Radhakrishnan, September 28, 1966:

"But the U.S. has in recent days repeatedly made offers to halt the bombing provided North Viet-Nam will agree on its side to reduce the temperature of the war. . . . The question of whether the U.S. should not first stop its bombing operations in the North may no longer be the most important. Cessation of bombing, if it is to be followed by its certain resumption in the future, can hardly promote the cause of peace in Viet-Nam. Nor does it seem that the inclusion of Viet Cong at the talks is a question that need present insuperable difficulties. The ultimate obstacle is traceable today to Hanoi's consistently stubborn insistence on full compliance with its 4-point and the Viet Cong's 5-point proposals, an important element in both of which is the demand for a unilateral withdrawal of the U.S. from Viet-Nam. . . .

"With Hanoi standing pat on its obdurate position, there remains only one hopeful and effective quarter to which peace appeals may be directed: This is the Soviet Union. The U.S. has recently made strenuous and public efforts to call upon Moscow to face up to its great power responsibilities and exercise its undoubtedly growing influence on North Viet-Nam with a view to helping the latter adopt a more positive response to peace proposals. . . . So far the Soviet Union's role has been to stand on the sidelines and help stiffen Hanoi's will to resist. A more positive interest on its part to see that peace prevails in the region is the objective towards which all with influence in Moscow must now work."

—Japan's Foreign Minister Takeo Miki:

"Before urging the United States to halt its bombing, I would like to verify the possibility of some meaningful reaction to this move on the part of North Viet-Nam. . . .

"I have sought to obtain some signs of this possibility in Moscow, Warsaw and the United Nations. But there was no one willing to act as 'guarantor'. . . .

"I believe that it is not unreasonable from the standpoint of the responsible leaders of the United States, that they should seek some form of guarantee that if the bombing is stopped, North Viet-Nam would respond by coming to the conference table for productive talks."

—Minister for External Affairs Paul Hasluck of Australia, April 18, 1967:

". . . there have been many efforts for peace and many disappointments in the lack of response from Hanoi. In some quarters there seems to be a disposition to believe that one-sided action by the United States Government could bring peace in Viet-Nam. Some people appear to believe that if it surrendered unconditionally, if it abandoned those who have depended on it and who are supporting its effort to resist aggression, and if it was false to the sacrifice of those who for many long years have painfully tried to maintain freedom in Viet-Nam and have given their lives in that cause, it would bring peace. It might bring a sort of peace. But it would not be a just peace. It would not be a peace with which an honourable man could live. It would not be a peace that would last but would be only a prelude to further aggression. Freedom is truly gone when one is not even free to defend it."

## GOALS BEYOND THE WAR

In a broad sense, the U.S. and Asian goals are identical: to speed development of independent Asian nations in a pluralistic world where the people in each country and each region are free to solve their problems in the light of their own needs and their own capabilities. A variety of views of the future has been advanced by Asian leaders:

—Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, April 22, 1966:

"There are people who believe that decolonization and the end of the European era means that we all go back to what we were. Ancient titles are resurrected in the hope that ancient glory—which is believed



to have existed—will similarly be resurrected! . . .

"I would choose to believe that the past was never thus, and that the future will never be like the past; and that we have it now, in our hands, to help to determine the shape of the future. Because it is not altogether in our hands. There are bigger forces. . . .

"Assuming that the process of bleeding and attrition goes on in South Viet-Nam; that, despite all the viciousness and the brutality of conflict, the Americans are not defeated. . . and that therefore the battleground cannot be shifted from South Viet-Nam across Cambodia on to Thailand; and that we in Southeast Asia have time to sort our little differences: What should we do? How can we secure the future for ourselves? . . .

"We thought—at least, I thought—that we would have secured it by a wider base—a broader federation, a multi-racial society—to rationalise what has happened over a hundred and fifty years of empire and the migration of peoples from China, India, Indonesia into Malaya, Singapore and the Borneo territories."

—Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs Thanat Khoman at the opening session of the First Ministerial Conference for Asian and Pacific Cooperation (ASPAC), Seoul, Korea, June 14, 1966:

"We do not claim to have succeeded in building paradises on this earth, therefore our people are free to leave their land any time they want. Only where terrestrial Edens are claimed to exist, high walls have to be built and armed patrols accompanied by police dogs have to be used to prevent the people within from escaping from their unwanted paradises. Our desire, therefore, is to see those barriers and obstacles which divide and separate

people of this world crumble down to make way for free exchange and contact between them for the sake of better understanding and good will. . . .

"Ours will be a society where freedom shall prevail, a freedom that will be enjoyed not by one, not by a few, but by all, freedom for the individual, freedom within the family as well as within the national community. It will be a freedom from the dictatorial and tyrannical domination by a class composed of a privileged few who usurp the populace. It will also be a society characterized by progressive evolution not by a stagnant immutability or by revolutionary jolts in which the lower passions of men are let loose."

—Singapore's Foreign Minister S. Rajaratman, March 1966:

"Now the centre of political gravity has shifted to the Pacific and it is interesting to note that President Theodore Roosevelt at the beginning of the century, foresaw such a development.

" 'The Mediterranean era,' he said, 'died with the discovery of America. The Atlantic era is now at the height of its development and must soon exhaust the resources at its command. The Pacific era, destined to be the greatest of all, is just at its dawn.'

"It may well be the greatest of human eras if the world realises and understands the implications of this shift in the centre of world politics. In the Pacific region there is, for the first time in human history, a spectacular meeting of the world . . . . In the Pacific, the nations of the world could learn how to build truly a world civilization through cooperation and peaceful competition. As Mr. Roosevelt said this may be the greatest of all human eras—the Pacific era."

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