AMERICAN SECURITY COUNCIL

WASHINGTON REPORT

Washington, January 29, 1968 WR 68-4

ON NEGOTIATING WHILE FIGHTING
(and vice versa)

At least once each year (perhaps it is to become a New Year's or Tet tradition), the Communist high command in Hanoi stirs up the "war doves"* in the United States by issuing a new, though not necessarily different, peace-talk-possibility pitch.

In January of last year, the olive-branch bunch was all a-twitter over whether someone in Hanoi had said that negotiations "would" start, or only that they "could" start, if the U.S. would cease unconditionally and forevermore the bombing of military targets in North Vietnam. The question of "would" or "could" last year was never clearly resolved; but this year nearly everyone seems to be agreed that Hanoi's spokesmen have said they "will" talk, on "relevant questions," after the U.S. has "unconditionally stopped its bombing and *all other acts of war*" against North Vietnam.

In both instances the "war-dove" reaction has been the same: that we should stop the air strikes in the North, at least for a while, to test Hanoi's sincerity once again.

Fortunately the Johnson Administration seems unlikely to let itself be stampeded into another prolonged bombing lull without some manner of concrete evidence beforehand that a peace-talk bid from Hanoi is sincere. The bitter experience of 1966, when the Communists rebuilt and resupplied their war machine during just such a pause, has not yet been forgotten. Since then both President Johnson and Secretary of State Rusk have said repeatedly that we would stop the bombings in the North as a prelude to negotiations only if there is some reciprocal reduction of military actions by the North Vietnamese. More recently, however, this official position appears to have been softened just a bit. Both the President and the Secretary of State have lately been keying their public statements on this passage from Mr. Johnson's speech in San Antonio, Texas, last September 29:

---

*The term "war-dove" is designed to denote the fact that most of those prominent persons in this country, generally referred to in the news media simply as "doves," who clamor for cessation of U.S. bombings in North Vietnam, neither demand nor offer any plans for a prompt end to the fighting in the South. Rather, they demonstrate and sometimes explicitly state a willingness to let that part of the war continue indefinitely, until such time as Hanoi might for some unspecified reason decide it is ready to negotiate a "peaceful" settlement. Thus this particular species of "dove," while talking of "peace" and "peaceful settlement," in fact advocates or at least implicitly endorses indefinitely protracted war, providing that they can also set the conditions and limitations under which other of their countrymen must face the risk of battle.

> "The United States is willing immediately to stop aerial and naval bombardment of North Vietnam when this will lead promptly to productive discussion. *We would assume that while discussions proceed, North Vietnam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation or limitation.* (Emphasis added.)

Those critics of Administration policy who now call for another sincerity-testing bombing pause, without requiring reciprocal military restraint by North Vietnam, have not necessarily forgotten what happened in 1966. Rather they contend that things have changed since then; that Hanoi might now actually want to negotiate, whereas they obviously weren't ready to do so back in 1966.

In this, the olive twig tweakers may be quite correct. There have been changes since then which might cause Hanoi to decide the time for negotiation has arrived, including most especially the easing of restrictions on our air forces since last September, to allow them to hit more significant and vital targets in North Vietnam. There are other and clearer indications than the latest peace-talk from Hanoi, that this change in our bombing effort has made it more difficult for them, not only to support their war machine in the South but also to maintain themselves in the North. And that, after all, has been the declared intent of the bombings in the North: to make continuation of the war so costly to North Vietnam that its ruling hierarchy would think it better to negotiate a settlement or otherwise desist from its aggressions in the South.

Also, it should be noted, enemy documents captured by our forces in February 1967 revealed that Communist strategists had, before that, anticipated U.S. military pressures might be increased to a point where agreement to enter negotiations might be necessary to relieve them. In a speech delivered to Communist cadre and combat leaders in South Vietnam in April, 1966, North Vietnamese General Nguyen Van Vinh said:

> The resolution of the Party's 11th conference clearly stated that in the process of achieving success, a situation where fighting and negotiations are conducted simultaneously may arise. At present, the situation is not yet ripe for negotiations. Fighting while negotiating is aimed at opening another front with a view to making the puppet (i.e., South Vietnamese) army more disintegrated, stimulating and developing the enemy's internal contradictions. . . .

But if this situation has now arisen, it brings up another fundamental question which neither the "war-hawks" of the Administration nor their "war-dove" critics seem to have grasped, or at least have not publicly treated: If the bombings in the North have finally compelled Hanoi to a "sincere" willingness to negotiate, will they remain willing and sincere enough to agree promptly to a settlement and cease-fire in the South if we have previously discontinued the very pressures—bombings in the North—which compelled them to negotiate?

There can be little doubt that if the Communists are now ready to negotiate, it is the bombings in the North which have brought them to that frame of mind. No amount of military presence or pressure by our forces in South Vietnam could ever do this, because to relieve themselves of that pressure the North Vietnamese regime needs only to withdraw its forces into its own territory or into adjacent sanctuary regions. And such is the primary, if not the sole purpose, in the Communist strategy, for entering into *negotiations while fighting:* To get the other side to discontinue or reduce those military actions which are damaging Communist forces beyond their endurance. After that, the Communists are quite willing to negotiate ad infinitum, while that part of the previous fighting which is to their own liking or advantage also continues.

The Korean experience clearly demonstrates that strategy in action. When Chinese Communist forces in Korea were on the verge (in mid-1951) of having to draw back from their po-

sitions near the 38th parallel, due partly to overextension of their supply lines and our air interdiction of them, Soviet Communists suggested to U.S. and UN officials that negotiations might be possible.

U.S. and UN officials responded promptly with a formal offer, which the North Korean and Chinese Communists almost as quickly accepted (with the obvious blessing of their on-the-spot Soviet advisors). U.S. military commanders have subsequently testified that, after peace talks began in Korea, they were forbidden by political authorities in Washington from applying the kind of pressures against enemy forces at the battle line which were necessary to compel the Communist negotiators to prompt agreement for fear of losing ground. Air strikes against enemy supply routes did continue during the protracted peace talks but were generally reduced in intensity and effectiveness; if not by an actual reduction in the number of sorties, by a reluctance on the part of some pilots to unduly risk being the last man shot down before the peace talks were consummated. (This writer, who was a prisoner of war in North Korea and held at forced labor near Pyongyang in 1952, personally witnessed the increased flow of enemy supply southward during that period. It must also be a matter of record in military intelligence files on target reconnaissance flights.)

The late Adm. C. Turner Joy, the long-time negotiator for the UN at Panmunjon, later gave as one of the reasons for failing to put pressure against the enemy ground forces at the battle line that the American public and their elected officials were kept hanging on the hope from day to day that "peaceful settlement" might be reached at any moment. Therefore, they could not understand or support the idea of launching a major offensive, for fear of wasting American lives in such a battle just before cease-fire agreement was reached. As a result, the peace talks dragged on for more than two years, with nearly twice as many American casualties (52,000 killed and wounded) as one of our top military commanders (Gen. Almond) estimated we would have suffered if we had moved beginning in July, 1951 to drive the Chinese Communist forces out and again liberate North Korea.

Once Communists have been compelled to enter negotiations in order to be able to continue fighting, they can then be expected to adjust their fighting tactics in such ways as they feel will either gain them what they want at the bargaining table or else keep both the fighting and negotiations inconclusive and indefinitely protracted. Admiral Joy said in that regard, following his experience in Korea:

> "In debating with the Communists there is no substitute for the imperative logic of military pressure. In the end, might is essential to right, not because you or I would have it that way, but because, unless we have armed might and unless we are willing to use that armed might in dealing with the Communists, we cannot win our point and, in fact, we may not survive to argue our point."

About a year and a half ago, former President Dwight Eisenhower revealed a previously secret fact which bears out Admiral Joy's contention. When the Korean negotiations had once again bogged down and seemed at an impasse in the summer of 1953, Mr. Eisenhower made it known to Communist leaders (through Prime Minister Nehru of India) that unless negotiations were resumed *and concluded* promptly, he would order whatever actions might be necessary to end the war *militarily*. The Communists promptly returned to the negotiations and agreed to a cease-fire in short order.

But perhaps the best and most current advice on how one should fight while negotiating is available from the enemy, themselves. In his April 1966 speech in South Vietnam wherein General Nguyen Van Vinh told his troops that a situation might emerge where fighting and negotiations are conducted simultaneously, he also said:

"In fighting while negotiating, the side which fights more strongly will compel the adversary to accept its conditions."

If and whenever the Hanoi regime shows itself actually willing to negotiate, it will be because our military pressures and threats against their own vital domain has forced them to do so. If we allow them, as a beginning step toward negotiated settlement, to enter negotiations in order that they can continue fighting, it would be self-defeating for us to, at the same time, discontinue the very elements of our own fighting which had compelled them to that point.

History, logic, and the enemy's own prescription, all dictate that if ever we find ourselves *negotiating while fighting* in Vietnam, we must maintain or even intensify our military pressure on the enemy high command and its domain, rather than reducing it, if we would gain a prompt and successful end to both the negotiations and the fighting.

Their statements over the past couple of years, despite the apparent softening in the President's San Antonio speech, indicate that the purported "war-hawks" within the Johnson Administration are well aware of this fact. But should the situation of *negotiating while fighting* actually arise, their "war-dove" critics can be counted on to clamor and coo for an easing of military pressure on the enemy, instead.

Duane Thorin

DUANE THORIN
Guest Editor

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor-in-Chief ..... John M. Fisher
Associate Editor and Secretary, National Strategy Committee ..... Anthony Harrigan
International Politics Editor ..... Dr. James D. Atkinson
Economics Editor ..... Dr. Lev E. Dobriansky
Foreign Editor ..... Frank J. Johnson
National Editor ..... William Gill
Research Director ..... William K. Lambie, Jr.
Associate Editor, Radio Producer ..... John F. Lewis
News Editor ..... Edgar Ansel Mowrer
Chief, Washington Bureau ..... Lee R. Pennington
Strategy and Military Affairs Editor ..... Dr. Stefan T. Possony
Law & Space Editor ..... Rear Admiral Chester Ward, USN (Ret.)

OFFICERS

President ..... John M. Fisher
Senior Vice President ..... Kenneth M. Piper
Vice President ..... Stephen L. Donchess
Vice President ..... John G. Sevcik
Vice President ..... Russell E. White
Secretary-Treasurer ..... Cyril W. Hooper

NATIONAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE

Robert W. Galvin, Chairman
Co-Chairmen
General Bernard A. Schriever, USAF (Ret.)
Loyd Wright

•

General Paul D. Adams, USA (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond, USA (Ret.)
Bennett Archambault
Dr. James D. Atkinson
Lloyd L. Austin
General Mark Clark
Charles S. Craigmile
Admiral Robert L. Dennison, USN (Ret.)
Henry Duque
Wade Fetzer, Jr.
Patrick J. Frawley, Jr.
Fred M. Gillies
Vice Admiral Elton Watters Grenfell, USN (Ret.)
Clifford F. Hood
James S. Kemper, Jr.
William H. Kendall
General Curtis E. Le May, USAF (Ret.)
A. B. McKee, Jr.
Admiral Ben Moreell, USN (Ret.)
Dr. Robert Morris
Dr. Stefan T. Possony
General Thomas S. Power, USAF (Ret.)
Brig. Gen. Robert C. Richardson, USAF (Ret.)
Vice Admiral W. A. Schoech, USN (Ret.)
Major General Dale O. Smith, USAF (Ret.)
Admiral Felix B. Stump, USN (Ret.)
Dr. Edward Teller
Rear Admiral Chester Ward, USN (Ret.)
General Albert W. Wedemeyer, USA (Ret.)
Major General W. A. Worton, USMC (Ret.)

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS

Karl Baarslag
Dr. Anthony T. Bouscaren
DeWitt S. Copp
Dr. Anthony Kubek
Rev. Daniel Lyons, S.J.
Dr. Gerhart Niemeyer
Dr. T. L. Shen
Duane Thorin
Stanley J. Tracy
Michael J. Ward

The American Security Council Washington Report is published weekly by the American Security Council Press. It reports on national and international developments affecting the nation's security for the information of the Council's over 3500 member companies and institutions. Annual subscription rate $12.00. Additional copies available at 25¢ each postpaid for non-members and 10¢ each postpaid for members.

Copyright © 1968 by American Security Council. All rights reserved except that permission is granted for reproduction in whole or in part if context is preserved, credit given and two copies are forwarded to the American Security Council Executive Offices.

AMERICAN SECURITY COUNCIL

Executive Offices and Research Center: 123 North Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60606
Washington Bureau: 1101 - 17th Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20036