

To: Committee, Sponsors and Friends

National Committee for a Political  
Settlement in Vietnam

From: Mary Temple

Report on current action

CONFIDENTIAL

February 26, 1970

1. The enclosed Senate Resolution 351 has been introduced by Senator Walter F. Mondale (D.-Minnesota) on the Senate floor, and into the hearings of the Foreign Relations Committee. When we get a Republican co-sponsor we will circulate it in the Senate and seek House action to make it a joint resolution.

We are hopeful that in a few weeks the timing may once again be right for projecting into high visibility the cease-fire proposal. With the public debate over the past six months centering on numbers and time-table on troop withdrawals, the cease-fire approach offers a fresh vantage point for critics of the present policy. Even for its supporters, it offers a route to a solution which need not conflict with "Vietnamization" but can supplement it by offering a way to move the Paris negotiations forward.

Unexpected support for the Mondale Resolution emerged last week with an editorial (enclosed) in the conservative Salt Lake City Deseret News, the most widely read and influential newspaper in Utah. Senator Frank Moss inserted the editorial in the Congressional Record, and joined as a co-sponsor of the resolution.

Since this newspaper and the state of Utah are heavily Republican and strongly pro-Nixon, this appears to indicate that even the Administration's supporters are still worried about the war and looking for something better than "Vietnamization."

2. Behind the scenes, discussions with Henry Kissinger and Under Secretary of State Elliott Richardson have been cordial but unproductive. They claim to be interested in a cease-fire, but say "it's a matter of timing." Privately, we understand that Richardson, and even Rogers, are considerably more open on the subject of a cease-fire offer than Mr. Kissinger or the President. Our efforts to get past Kissinger and reach the President have not yet succeeded.

We're attempting to work through Senator Scott's office. Scott has shown interest in a cease-fire; he and Senator Mansfield amended the Administration resolution, inserting a provision "calling on North Vietnam to proclaim a mutual cease-fire." The amendment received reluctant Administration support. The unamended version passed the House, and 46 senators have signed the amended version.

In reply to an inquiry from the Foreign Relations Committee regarding this resolution, the State Department wrote that the Administration has been on record since May 14 in favor of "an internationally supervised cease-fire."

While this statement is not exactly accurate (the President said cease-fires, which is quite different from a general cease-fire), we are glad to have it on the record now.

3. Our work on land reform, on the other hand, has been of intense interest in the Administration, in the State Department, and on Capitol Hill.

In December Senator Muskie introduced an amendment to the Foreign Aid Bill to provide funds to underwrite the costs of a land reform program in South Vietnam. Underwriting the bonds needed for this constructive step toward political and economic freedom for the peasants of South Vietnam would cost \$400 million over ten years — less than a week's cost of the war.

Although the amendment had Administration support, it was defeated. The defeat did not signify opposition to the principle of land reform in South Vietnam but was due to a combination of unfortunate circumstances and timing. Coming late in the debate on the foreign aid bill, the Foreign Relations Committee had to fight for the original bill and didn't support the addition.

The Muskie Amendment was offered in the hope that assured financing of its costs would encourage the Saigon legislature to pass the pending land reform bill.

The bill, which was gutted by the Lower House last fall has been restored nearly to its original form by the Saigon Senate Agriculture Committee and reported favorably to the whole body with the debate scheduled to begin within a week to ten days.

Senator Warren Magnuson introduced a resolution into the Senate supporting land reform in South Vietnam. It was co-sponsored by Senators Jackson, Cook, Cranston, Muskie, Packwood, Percy and Proxmire.

4. In the meantime, we are disturbed that President Thieu instigated proceedings against Deputy Tran Ngoc Chau and Hoang Ho, which have resulted in the conviction to 20 years in prison for Chau and death for Ho.

Unreported in the press thus far is a petition appealing the conviction signed by a large number of Chau's colleagues in the Assembly.

Following his conviction Chau said in a statement to the press, "So I ask the Vietnamese soldiers with whom I have fought for 20 years, the Vietnamese people, and the American families who have members sacrificing for the war to do more to help this country build a truly democratic system."

At the time our Committee met with Mr. Chau in Vietnam last September, he was under pressure and harrassment by the government, expecting arrest. There

seems to be little doubt that activities for which he was convicted were undertaken, as he says, with the knowledge and cooperation of the U.S. government. We are considering whether some kind of action by our group will be helpful in this situation.

Other current action includes:

- (1) Gathering political and public support for the Mondale Resolution in the Senate and organizing House action.
- (2) Continuing to press behind the scenes the arguments for the cease-fire offer in Administration circles.
- (3) Public education activities, including mailings, ads, etc.
- (4) An opinion-leaders statement to be circulated in communities and organizations urging the President to seek a cease-fire agreement.
- (5) State-by-state action organizing letters to the President, to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and to Senators and Congressmen urging co-sponsorship of S.R. 351.
- (6) Testimony in further Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings.