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The U. S. Position in Vietnam

S. F. CHRONICLE

JANUARY 3 AND 4, 1966

Following is a statement on the U. S. Position in Vietnam made by prominent businessman and financier Marriner S. Eccles in Salt Lake City December 22. Mr. Eccles was assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury in 1934. He has held several positions on the Federal Reserve Board and within the Federal Reserve System. Mr. Eccles has been a member of the National Advisory Council on International Monetary and Financial Problems, the advisory board of the Export-Import Bank and the World Population Emergency Campaign. The text of his statement will be continued in this space tomorrow.

Under no circumstance should we escalate the war in Vietnam. Our position there is indefensible. Contrary to government propaganda, we were not invited by and have no commitment to any representative or responsible government of South Vietnam. We are there as an aggressor in violation of our treaty obligation under the United Nations Charter. We have not observed either the letter or the spirit of our obligations with respect to our actions in Vietnam. As a result, we have the opposition of not only the entire Communist world but the rest of the world as well, with few minor exceptions.

The facts are, the Geneva Treaty of 1954, after the defeat of the French, affirmed the independence of the colonial government of Vietnam and called for an end to hostilities. The British and the Russians were co-chairmen of that conference. An interim trusteeship was agreed upon whereby the French would preside in the South and the Viet Minh in the North for two years, ending in a national election in 1956 when the Vietnamese people would choose their own government.

The U.S. Vietnam Lobby did not permit that election to be held, knowing that Ho Chi Minh, the Communist leader of the North, was so popular he would unquestionably win the election. As a matter of fact, John F. Kennedy, then

Senator, in a major speech in the Senate in April, 1954, warned against any negotiated solution that would allow participation in the Vietnamese government by Ho Chi Minh. The Communists, he said, would eventually take over because they were so popular. In his memoirs Eisenhower stated that had an election been held in Vietnam, as provided in the Geneva accord, an estimated 80 percent would have voted for Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader.

Diem was brought to the United States in 1950 from a 17-year self-imposed exile, under the auspices of Michigan State University, and here he found strong support in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, his brother being a Catholic Bishop. Cardinal Spellman became a strong supporter, also Justice Douglas, Joseph Kennedy and his son, John F. Kennedy; General Lansdale (the CIA man in Saigon), CIA Director Allen Dulles, General Donovan and other strong anti-Communists. They were largely responsible for bringing about Diem's ascension to the Premiership of South Vietnam in July, 1954.

From his first day in office he set about crushing opposition and concentrating power in small nepotist groups. Diem's targets included the private armies of the religious sects and the anti-Communist Vietnamese leaders, who were also anti-Diem. He wasn't looking for popularity. He knew his support was slim—that he would have trouble with the majority of the population who had been supporting the Viet Minh in the long war against the French; therefore, force was the only way he could effectively ready his people for the democratic alternative.

Due to the paid propaganda of the U.S. Vietnam Lobby his dictatorial tactics were not widely reported in the American press until eight years later when he fell from power and he and his brother were assassinated by the military within his own government. Since that time South Vietnam has been unable to develop a stable or responsi-

ble government, as evidenced by the many changes in leadership.

The South Vietnamese Communists, with the help of the North Vietnamese, defeated the French. They are now fighting for the independence of their country against the non-Communist South Vietnamese. In short, it is a civil war with the Viet Cong supported by North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese held together and supported by the United States. The South Vietnamese Catholics (about 10 per cent of the population), property owners and business interests in the large cities are the strong anti-Communist supporters of South Vietnam, and are the minority.

We have provided large amounts of military and economic aid and supplied them with military advisers, but until the present administration came into office we did not furnish American troops to help fight their war, until it was apparent they were being defeated. We have gradually taken over the direction of their government as well as their war until now it has become an American war rather than a Vietnamese war. Why go to Vietnam to drive the Communists out when we can't get them out of Cuba, 90 miles from our shore?

The North Vietnamese supplied troops to the Viet Cong only after American troops entered the war in large numbers and we commenced heavy bombing of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong. It was then that China and Russia publicly announced they would give all the military and economic aid necessary to the North Vietnamese in order to defeat the U.S. aggressors. As a result, we now have aligned against us the powerful countries of China and Russia, including all the Communist world, with practically no support from the rest of the world in spite of Rusk's and McNamara's recent appeals to NATO. Under these conditions we cannot win. You cannot defeat people in a jungle war where the majority is against you and it is impossible to tell your friends from your enemies.

(cont. on back page)

What Johnson's Herald Angels Sing

I. F. Stone's Weekly, January 10, 1966

The painful fact which emerges from a close study of reactions at home and abroad to the Johnson peace offensive is that no one really believes in its sincerity. At home the hawks see it as a clever maneuver to disarm the peace movement. Abroad it is generally regarded as the prelude to a wider war. The Johnson Administration had a simple way to correct this impression. A declaration that it was prepared to accept the National Liberation Front as one of the parties to a negotiation would have indicated that the U.S. was serious in its search for peace. Even a European paper as far right as Belgium's Catholic-conservative *Libre Belgique* put its finger on the continued unwillingness to deal with the NLF as "the weak point of the American position." (*Washington Star*, Jan. 4). This does not require acceptance of the NLF as sole representative of the South Vietnamese; the Saigon government and the neutralist Buddhists are also entitled (on the Laotian model) to a place. But to negotiate the settlement of any war, one must deal with the enemy one is fighting.

The Same Promises We Broke Before

The President, in one of the 14 points being circulated by the State Department at home and abroad, is quoted as saying cryptically that if North Vietnam stopped its "aggression," the "Viet Cong would not have difficulty being represented." * But if this is true, why not say openly and unambiguously that we will negotiate with them? Instead Secretary Rusk in his December 30 interview with Canadian Broadcasting Company asked the Viet Cong to "lay down their arms, accept amnesty, engage in free elections." They did lay down their arms in 1954, they were guaranteed an amnesty in the Geneva agreement. Despite this, many were executed and others thrown into concentration camps. The promised elections were never held. How often can you sell the Brooklyn Bridge to the very same sucker? The fact is that the Administration has indicated here and in Saigon that it does not intend to agree to any settlement which would give the NLF or the Viet Cong any voice in the future government of South Vietnam. That would, by the Administration's definition, still leave South Vietnam open to "subversion" or "indirect aggression." But "unconditional discussions" hedged by the condition that we will not deal directly with those we are actually fighting nor make any concession to them is tantamount to a demand for their surrender. This is why the peace offensive does not look real even to our friends and allies.

One of the countries visited by the emissaries Mr. Johnson has flown out dramatically all around the globe was Canada. Last April its Prime Minister Pearson was one of the first to suggest a pause in the bombardment of North Vietnam as a prelude to negotiations. One would have expected him to be especially pleased by the new pause and the peace offensive. Ottawa was impressed neither by the visit of McGeorge Bundy to Ottawa nor by the 45-minute telephone conversation between President and Prime Minister in which it culminated, perhaps because Mr. Bundy had not been persuasive enough. *Le Monde's* Ottawa correspondent reported (Jan. 1) that the Canadian government afterward "minimized the importance of the surprise visit" and saw no change in Washington's policy. That dispatch revealed another instance of the way in which our top officials seem more anxious to foreclose than

to find loopholes for negotiation. Blair Seaborn, Canada's representative last year on the International Control Commission and one of our chief intermediaries in talking with Hanoi last year, took part in the talks with Mr. Bundy. One of the things we wanted him to find out for us was whether the famous Four Points were actual conditions for negotiations. Last June Mr. Seaborn reported that he could obtain no precise response. *Le Monde's* dispatch from Ottawa discloses that the Canadian diplomat gathered the impression "that the evasive responses of Hanoi indicated the desire of the North Vietnamese leaders to sound out the possibilities of compromise directly with American representatives." The U.S. chose to place the more pessimistic interpretation on Hanoi's attitude, perhaps because as Ambassador Lodge was saying about that time (*Meet the Press*, May 23) negotiations would be "disastrous" and Mr. Johnson's offer of "unconditional discussions" at Baltimore a few weeks earlier was only intended to put the onus on the other side.

Two "Signals" We Ignored

Though Mr. Rusk claims to have had his antenna alert for months to any possible "signal" from the other side, this and many other signals for diplomatic exploration and negotiation have been ignored. In the wake of the Seaborn inquiries, there were two other signals from Hanoi last year which the State Department brushed aside. These have since come to the attention of a group of newspapermen here, including myself, but have not been discussed in print. The first signal was the formal response given by Ho Chi Minh in *Le Monde* last August 14 to questions put him by the noted French historian of Vietnam, M. Philippe Devillers, who seemed to commute last year between Washington and Hanoi. Last July, according to *Le Monde*, "certain American sources" had decided seriously to study the Four Points. The questions Ho answered sounded like requests by Washington at elucidation. Two important points came out of Ho's answers. One was that he was not insisting on immediate reunification, but was prepared to accept indefinitely the existence of an autonomous South Vietnam if neutral and if it maintained "fraternal" relations with the North. The other was that Ho was not demanding immediate U.S. troop withdrawal and was prepared to negotiate "the conditions and guarantees" of U.S. disengagement if Washington gave "tangible proof" that it accepted the principles embodied in the Four Points.

A second move which Hanoi regarded as a peaceful signal came several weeks later. Secretary Rusk had said several times that the U.S. would stop bombing the North if it would make some comparable "de-escalation" such as withdrawing the 325th Division from South Vietnam. On September 21, Richard Dudman in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and Bernard Gwertzman in the *Washington Star* disclosed on the basis of a briefing that U.S. intelligence reported there had been no contact in recent weeks with the 325th Division. The briefing—significantly—was not in the State Department, which at once knocked down these stories. The Department's spokesman, Robert J. McCloskey admitted that the 325th had not been "engaged in activities," according to the *Washington Star* Sept. 24, but said they were "believed to be still there." Just what made the Department believe they were still there was not explained; perhaps Mr. Rusk's antenna detected them rustling in the jungle foliage. All this was very confusing at the time, and the Department was given the benefit of the doubt; now it appears on reliable authority that the 325th was

* Though all Goldberg would say at a UN press conference Jan. 5 as we go to press is that the Viet Cong "point of view" would be represented at the conference table.

withdrawn at the time. Washington's failure to keep its promise and reciprocate by calling off the bombing was regarded as proof of insincerity by Hanoi.

This record, like Washington's treatment of the Four Points, can hardly create confidence. These Four Points, Ho said in his cable to Pope Paul are merely a restatement of the 1954 Geneva pact. Washington disagrees only on Point 3. Though the press has been encouraged to report Point 3 as handing over South Vietnam to the Viet Cong, all it says is that "the internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves, in accordance with the program of the NLF without any foreign interference." In the memorandum prepared for Vice President Humphrey's trip abroad it is said that this "would require the imposition of the program of the liberation front upon South Vietnam, whether the South Vietnamese wanted it or not." This reflects the State Department's genius for distortion. The NLF program calls for election of "a new National Assembly through universal suffrage" and for the establishment of free press, opinion and assembly. After 12 years of financing dictatorship in South Vietnam, the U.S. government does not enhance its reputation by trying to make it appear that the NLF program is somehow undemocratic. The NLF program is so broad and general in its principles of democracy, land reform, neutrality and amnesty as to allow ample room for honorable negotiation and guarantees of a free regime if we were looking for real negotiation.

The peace offensive seems to be a pantomime with wholly different purposes. The bill for the Vietnamese war is grow-

ing by huge increments. Last May Mr. Johnson had to ask Congress for a supplementary appropriation of \$700,000,000; in July he went back for an extra \$1.7 billion. Now it is disclosed that Mr. Johnson must ask for another \$12 to \$13 billion more for the current fiscal year to meet the rising costs of the war. If that is how much the war is costing us in South Vietnam, it will cost many times more when extended—as we seem on the verge of doing—to Laos, Cambodia and Thailand, not to speak of China. It was a political necessity to seem at least to make every effort for peace before presenting so monstrous a bill to Congress. It's not just the peace movement, it's the fiscal conservatives who are worrying the Administration. This little war is adding up to a very large bill.

Abroad the peace offensive must be seen against the background of the reports by Rusk and McNamara to NATO in December. The accounts filtering out of that meeting in Paris made them sound like the apocalyptic Air Force bomber Generals, ready to take on China. As *Le Monde* said Dec. 18 the way they talked of the Chinese peril indicated Washington had little illusion about the possibility of a peaceful settlement and was embarking on a war of great dimensions "without knowing where escalation would stop." Our surmise, looking at Johnson's various jet-age angels, is that Humphrey's mission was to drum up Asian troops; Harriman's to warn the East European Communists to keep hands off; McNamara's and Rusk's to shake our NATO allies out of their indifference to our obsession with China, and Goldberg's to try and persuade the Pope of the purity of our intentions as we move giddily along the brink.

Arthur Hoppe

Victory Comes To West Vhtnnng

S. F. CHRONICLE
DECEMBER 3, 1965

IT WAS a glorious sight. The flags of the United States and West Vhtnnng flew bravely side by side over the rostrum. Excitement flowed through the capital of Sag On. For at long last the war to save this Southeast Asian nation from Communism had been won.

"It is with a tremendous sense of accomplishment," said the U.S. Secretary of Defense, "that we gather here to celebrate V-V Day. There were some faint hearts who said we could never wipe out the dread Viet-Nairan guerrillas. But we pledged to save our beloved friends, the Vhtnnngians, if it took us 100 years. And we have not only done so, my friends, but we have done so 13 years ahead of schedule.

"Here with us today to share equally in our hour of triumph is the entire surviving population of West Vhtnnng. His name is—let's see—Mr. Thang Sa Lot. Would you care to say a few words on this historic occasion, Mr. Thang?"

AN INCREDIBLY elderly gentleman in peasant pajamas and coolie hat shuffled to the microphone, clasped his hands, bowed and said: "I wish to thank the mighty United States Government for saving me from Communism."

With that he sat down. The Secretary looked somewhat miffed. "Really, Mr. Thang," he said, "I feel you might say a little more than just that. After all, as a representative of our brave allies, the freedom-loving Vhtnnngian peoples, you . . ."

"Excuse me," said Mr. Thang, "I am the freedom-loving Vhtnnngian peoples."

"True," said the Secretary. "And I'm sure you, the Vhtnnngian peoples, appre-

ciate the fact that to insure your democratic processes three generations of American troops have been bombing, blasting and fighting night and day from one end of your lovely little country to the other."

"Ah," said Mr. Thang with a nostalgic sigh. "My lovely country. When I was a boy . . ."

"Now look here, Thang," said the Secretary, frowning, "I don't want to accuse you of ingratitude. But to preserve your freedom we've gone through \$212.3 billion, 123,748 tons of bombs and 93 stable Vhtnnngian governments. Even now as we look up, the sky is filled with those who did so much to save you Vhtnnngian peoples—American pilots in American planes which . . ."

"Ai-yee!" cried Mr. Thang, falling flat on his face. "Take cover!"

"IT'S ONLY a fly-over to honor our mutual victory," said the Secretary irritably. "Please pick yourself up. Remember, you are a living example to all other Southeast Asian nations that they can count on their ally, America, to fight to the last to save them from Communism."

"The only living example," said Mr. Thang, nodding.

"After all," said the Secretary, putting his arm around him, "that's what this war was all about—setting a good example. And surely, you who have been through it must have some ringing message for your neighboring nations who face the same menace."

Mr. Thang surveyed the smoking countryside, thought for a moment and at last spoke up. "With America as an ally," he said, "who fears Communism?"

'WE MUST NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT'

ECCLES (cont.)

We are rapidly destroying the very country we propose to save—South Vietnam—as well as killing hundreds of its men, women and children by our incessant and heavy bombing of the Viet Cong. We are adding to our burdens thousands of refugees that we must feed, clothe and house. What would the situation be if North Vietnam, with the help of China and Russia, should retaliate by bombing Saigon and the other principal cities in South Vietnam? Even if we won their freedom and turned the country over to them they have no capacity for democracy or self rule.

With a bigger war shaping up on the ground and fighting 9000 miles away logistics are almost an insolvable problem. With troop strength only 158,000 in November our logistic needs shot up from 75,000 tons in February to 700,000 tons in November. The jet aircraft are burning more than a million gallons of fuel a month. Ports are clogged—ships wait 10 days to two months to unload cargoes. What will the situation be if we undertake to double or quadruple our fighting forces, planes, helicopters, etc.?

Our sense of negotiating a peace reveals our total insensibility to the other party's problem. Two antagonists cannot negotiate their own peace terms. The matter should be turned over to an impartial body, like the United Nations, each party agreeing to a ceasefire and to accept any terms decided upon by the impartial body.

If the war is escalated, before many months the United States will probably be required to go on a war footing and our present domestic prosperity will be ended. Inflationary pressures will greatly increase and the position of the dollar in the world market will be further jeopardized unless we bring about a balanced budget through increasing taxes and cutting back domestic programs.

It may be the North Vietnamese do not control the course of the war—it is now in the hands of the Chinese and the Russians. As co-chairman of the Geneva Conference the Russians have refused to take any part in bringing about a peaceful settlement. They may be glad to have us tied down in a most unpopular war in Asia, which greatly weakens our position in NATO as well as throughout the

world. They must avoid giving support to Peking's charges that they are conniving with Mr. Johnson to end the war. To do otherwise would greatly weaken their own leadership in the Communist world. It would seem we have fallen into a trap that neither China nor Russia is willing to let us get out of with either face-saving or victory.

We could not have chosen anywhere in the world a more difficult place to challenge the Communists and more to the liking of China—on her border. How could we have been so blind and misinformed? The decisions were made by the President and a handful of advisers in the White House, State and Defense Departments without debate or prior approval of the Congress. This is dictatorship that has no place in our democracy. The public has not been advised as to what was taking place. They have been misinformed and brainwashed to such an extent that opponents are accused of being disloyal and supporting the enemy and patriotism has come to mean unquestioning support of the Administration.

Blindly accepting the Government's position in Vietnam is more senseless than blindly accepting its domestic programs because mistakes in Vietnam can be far more disastrous. The real patriots today are the members of Congress and other public leaders who have the courage to oppose the Administration and urge it not to escalate the war but to get out of Vietnam at the earliest date. This would be the least costly from every standpoint—even our world prestige would be enhanced.

If our leaders insist on escalating this war to a finish it is likely to be the most disastrous of the wars we have fought, measured by cost, loss of life and prestige throughout the world, and the most futile. It could lead to World War III—the United States alone fighting the Communist world. This could trigger an atomic war which all the world dreads.

The real tragedy is the useless suffering of the millions of our people whose sons, husbands and brothers are drawn into this conflict unwillingly and are killed or maimed for life, not in defense of their country but because of our incompetent leadership.

Peace in the world will never be brought about by aggression or by rash and inept remarks like McNamara made at the Paris Conference of NATO when he urged our European allies to plan now to meet a Chinese military threat to their own security within five years. We

are justly accused of trying to utilize NATO as a tool for our anti-Chinese policy for aggression in Asia. Such remarks make it impossible for us to negotiate our way out of Vietnam.

The alternative is to recognize China and bring her into the United Nations before she becomes an atomic power in three to five years. Even her avowed enemies, India and Russia, have voted for her inclusion in the U.N. With all our domestic problems—mass poverty, unemployment, riots in our cities and the highest rate of juvenile delinquency and crime throughout the world—who are we to be the world's policeman?

The billions being wasted on the war in Vietnam, if used to eliminate mass poverty and illiteracy in the undeveloped countries, would do far more than aggression to prevent the spread of communism.

We must recognize that it is just as important, if not more so, for the Communists to save face in Asia as it is for the U.S. We should be less interested in saving face and more interested in saving lives. Great nations over the years have survived face-saving and withdrawing from an untenable position. It can be done with dignity. Certainly we are a sufficiently great nation to relieve the world of the fear of war that is so terrifying. Not only would we save face, but we would win approval of the world and gain in stature.

WE NEED YOUR HELP
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and Suggestions to
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