

TO END THE WAR

THERE is one new initiative that the United States could take in order to break the deadlock in the Vietnam war.

It would require great political courage and subtlety. But it offers an honorable escape from a hideous impasse.

At the moment the situation is like that of two animals with their horns locked. Peace offers are made to Hanoi, but lead nowhere. All that American officials in Saigon can offer is anything up to 10 more years of bitter struggle.

The new move that the Americans might make is, in their next peace offensive, to ignore Hanoi and address their remarks directly to the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front (the political arm of the Vietcong). The Americans—

doing no more than echoing President Kennedy—would say: 'This is a South Vietnamese war and we'll leave Hanoi out of it.' The Front has already shown signs of being fairly willing to talk peace to Americans—but not to Marshal Ky, the South Vietnam Premier. And, as recent discussions about prisoners of war have shown, arranging talks presents no technical problems.

The long-range aim of the Americans would be to get the ball rolling so that eventually the Vietcong would talk to 'moderate' South Vietnamese political representatives in Saigon.

Until fairly recently, the Americans refused absolutely even to consider the possibility of talking to the Vietcong.

Jan. 29, 1967

By Gavin Young
London Observer

Officially, they have declined to regard the Vietnam conflict as a civil war and have time and again described it as a 'war of aggression' from the north. In recent months, however, their position has somewhat shifted: Secretary of State Rusk has said that the US would be prepared to have the Vietcong represented at any peace talks with Hanoi.

Reasons for talking

Nevertheless, any American approach to the Vietcong would presuppose a fundamental change in the American policy.

It would imply a courageous admission that it is not simply a war of aggression. It would imply a willingness to regard the Vietnam war as a South Vietnamese war. But is that unreasonable?

Good reasons exist for Vietcong willingness to talk at this point. It is ridiculous to imagine that its leadership is any less alarmed and appalled by the scale of casualties and the sufferings of the South Vietnamese people than are leaders in Washington or Saigon. Again, the

NEW STATESMAN 20 JANUARY 1967

What the Vietcong Really Want

GLORIA STEWART*

More than two thirds of the total population of South Vietnam live in the rich, rice-growing paddies of the Mekong Delta. It was here the rebel forces of the Vietminh were spawned during the French occupation. The Vietminh are now the National Liberation Front: the Vietcong. There are few places in the Delta where an American can feel safe. It is still the rebel stronghold.

I have just spent some time in the Delta talking to various members of the NLF and interviewing their 'foreign minister', Nguyen Van Hieu.

Contrary to the view accepted by most Americans, I was not able to find any evidence to prove that the Vietcong—here at least—are controlled, directed and manipulated by the Hanoi politburo and army. In fact an American adviser at Ben Tre in the Delta admitted to me: 'There are no North Vietnamese in the Delta that I have ever come across.' All the Vietcong guerrillas I spoke to had been born and reared in the Delta. Hieu himself is a native of Ga Mau. What would these thousands of guerrilla fighters be supposed to do, if America's Manila proposals were accepted? If the North Vietnamese and the Americans were to withdraw their troops, Ky would still be left with the problem of the Vietcong (as one of his ministers remarked at Manila). Are all these South Vietnamese expected to uproot themselves and go to the North? It would be hard on the Catholics and Buddhists, who are well represented even in the NLF leadership: they would have to become

communists in the North though their interests are in land reform and improving conditions in the South.

Close inspection reveals differences in policy between the North Vietnamese and the NLF which are as far apart as, say, those between the Soviet Communist Party and the British Labour Party. Negotiations with the North Vietnamese always get bogged down round Hanoi's famous four points. Yet this is what Hieu said to me about negotiations: 'The NLF is willing to begin preliminary talks directly with America—without conditions.' Hanoi says that, before any talks about peace can start, bombing the North must stop. But only a cessation of bombing and military activities in the South would do the NLF any real good. Indirectly they would benefit from a cessation in the North because of slightly faster-flowing supplies from Hanoi. But the supplies get through even now. America's argument for continuing to bomb the North is that, without it, more people would be released for the North Vietnamese army operating in the South. But many American colonels and captains confirm that the North Vietnamese regular is of limited use to the NLF. The Vietcong guerrillas, who know the territory and the tunnels, can fade into the local population—without a North Vietnamese accent to give them away. They are much more effective. This is why the North Vietnamese are seldom found other than in the north of South Vietnam. They are used for larger-scale operations and leave the tricky fly-by-night stuff to the locals. Many of the North Vietnamese soldiers, I was told, nowadays understand the way of life in the

South so badly that they stick out among the local population almost as much as the US Special Forces.

Hieu on the four points again: 'When I said talks could only take place directly with the Americans, it was because we will never negotiate with Ky, and Ky will never negotiate with us.' The second of Hanoi's four points is 'South Vietnamese affairs must be settled by the South Vietnamese in accordance with the programme of the NLF.' Here is Hieu's comment on this: 'There is the widespread idea in the West that the NLF is committed to adopting the political system of the North. This is not so. First of all we are prepared to form a coalition with a moderate Saigon government (this excludes Ky). And we know of many members of the government who would be willing to form a coalition with us. We favour a mixed economy as opposed to the monolithic system of the North. But we do want some socialist reforms such as land reform, free medical services and education. We want Vietnam to be neutral, whereas the North is firmly committed to the communist bloc at present.'

Again, on unification of Vietnam—the third of Hanoi's four points—Hieu had the following to say: 'The NLF would like to see Vietnam unified. But realistically we know this would be difficult and slow because the systems of the two halves of Vietnam are so far apart.'

The NLF want the Americans out of Vietnam. They never liked the French when they were there. Nor do they think much, historically, of their close neighbours, the Chinese. The Vietnamese just do not like foreigners. This is Hanoi's fourth point. The NLF agree. But the NLF do not demand that the Americans leave prior to even preliminary talks. They, according to Hieu, can see that the Americans won't.

Cont. back page

* Gloria Stewart has recently been visiting SE Asia for The People.

The Hanoi Raids

Bombing Killed Viet Talks-- U.N.

Times-Post Service

United Nations

North Vietnam definitely agreed last December to an American-instigated proposal for direct discussions to end the war in Vietnam, a highly authoritative Western source said yesterday.

Arrangements went so far as to specify Warsaw as the locale of the talks.

But after the American bombing of Hanoi on December 13 and 14 North Vietnam withdrew its agreement, charging bad faith by the United States.

SKEPTICISM

President Johnson said at his news conference Thursday that there have been no "serious indications" of a Communist desire to talk peace. This has produced considerable skepticism here about American intentions among those who profess to be familiar with the details of the effort that failed.

The proposal for direct talks is said to have originated in discussions between American Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and the Polish representative on the International Control Commission, Ambassador Janusz Lewandowski, at the home of the Italian ambassador in Saigon on December 2 and 3.

REPLY

Lodge is reported to have asked the Polish representative to take the initiative in setting up contacts with no conditions to its agreement about a prior cessation of American bombing of North Vietnam.

On or about December 4 a reply came from Polish foreign Minister Adam Rapacki stating that Hanoi had agreed to talks at the ambassadorial level in Warsaw. North Vietnam asked that special representatives be dispatched from Wash-

ington for the talks.

Hanoi reportedly attached no condition to its agreement about a prior cessation of American bombing of North Vietnam.

Communist sources here regard the reports that Hanoi agreed to talk without stipulating an end to the bombing as highly significant. One indicated that Hanoi had even encouraged Poland to establish contact with the U.S.

PLAN

Previously Hanoi had insisted publicly on acceptance of its own four-point peace plan involving among other things an end to bombing and complete withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam, and settlement of South Vietnamese affairs in accord with the program of the National Liberation Front, political arm of the Viet Cong.

Then came the bombing of Hanoi; U.S. officials have described any damage to civilian areas accidental. According to the allied diplomat, Rapacki subsequently relayed word to the U.S. that Hanoi had withdrawn its agreement for the meeting in Warsaw.

Other knowledgeable sources say that Hanoi accused the U.S. of sabotaging the arrangement.

"Everytime we have agreed to talks with the Americans," North Vietnamese officials are quoted as commenting. "Washington has escalated the war."

Hanoi's 'Goodwill'

Reports of Peace Signals

Associated Press

Reuters

New York

FEB 6, 1967

Newsweek magazine said yesterday that Senator Robert F. Kennedy (Dem.-N.Y.) received a "peace signal" from Hanoi through the French government during his visit to Paris last week.

The magazine said that the Paris message indicated a willingness on Hanoi's part to negotiate a settlement of the Vietnam war in a three-stage process after the end of United States bombing of North Vietnam.

In Washington, Kennedy said he would have no comment on the report until after he had discussed the situation with the White House and State Department officials.

Kennedy, who returned Saturday from a ten-day trip to Europe, said repeatedly during the tour that the next few weeks are "critical and crucial" to the quest for peace.

MESSAGE

According to Newsweek's report, the Paris message "was transmitted to Kennedy and a U.S. embassy official by the director of Asian affairs in the French foreign office, who insisted it came from Mai Van Bo, Ho Chi Minh's representative in Paris."

Newsweek said "For content and detail, the Paris message went far beyond anything the U.S. has yet received from any other source."

The magazine said U.S. officials are "downgrading the Paris message as 'French speculation.' But high

Both columns cont.
next page

Tokyo

FEB 6, 1967

North Vietnam believes it has shown goodwill by offering the possibility of peace talks and is hoping the United States will reciprocate, according to Australian Communist newsmen Wilfred Burchett in a dispatch from Hanoi.

It was in an interview with Burchett that North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh recently touched off speculation that Hanoi had relaxed its conditions for starting negotiations, apparently insisting only on a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam.

Observers here thought it likely the speculation would be intensified by the positive note struck by Burchett, whose writings follow closely the thinking of the Hanoi government.

DISPATCH

In his dispatch, dated Friday and scheduled to appear in today's English language Yomiuri newspaper here, he describes Trinh's statement as a "declaration that cessation of U.S. bombardments could lead to talks between North Vietnam and the U.S."

As in Trinh's statement there was no specific reference to Hanoi's earlier four demands, including the withdrawal of American troops from the south, as preconditions for talks.

"Hanoi's statement or talks was made to test the sincerity of Washington's frequent expressions of a desire for peace negotiations, et cetera," Burchett wrote.

"Hanoi feels it has opened the door with Nguyen Duy Trinh's statement and that it is up to Washington to make the next move..." he wrote,

French sources in Washington and Paris insist the plan represents North Vietnamese, not French, thinking.

STAGES

Newsweek said the main points of the Paris message are that Hanoi is prepared to negotiate a settlement in three stages. The first would be bilateral discussions of U.S.-North Vietnamese relations; in the second stage, Hanoi would be ready to discuss the future U.S. role in South Vietnam, and in the final stage there would be negotiations aimed at overall settlement in Vietnam.

Newsweek said the French official reportedly said the three-stage plan would enable Hanoi to retreat from its "four points" without loss of face.

Ho Bid-- Invitation To Johnson

United Press

Tokyo.

Radio Hanoi early today repeated President Ho Chi Minh's invitation to President Johnson to come to North Vietnam and discuss peace.

A Hanoi broadcast, monitored in Tokyo, referred to cables sent by representatives of Newsweek magazine and the Columbia Broadcasting System asking if reports that Mr. Johnson had been invited to Hanoi were true.

The first reports of the Ho invitation came from two Protestant clergymen and a rabbi who visited North Vietnam and talked with Ho in January. One of the ministers, A. M. Muste, of New York, said Mr. Johnson had been invited.

The North Vietnamese broadcast said Muste's statement "broadly reflects the President's idea."

"Recently Newsweek Tokyo correspondent Bernard Krisher cabled President Ho Chi Minh of the Democratic

adding:

"If Johnson is really going to stick to his earlier pronouncements, he must definitely halt the bombardments, start the talks and see what steps are possible next."

"For the moment, Hanoi is confident it has demonstrated its goodwill and is still hoping, despite Johnson's press conference remarks, that Washington would show the same modicum of goodwill," he said.

Burchett, who has spent a great deal of time in Hanoi in the last two years, added:

"If Washington concludes that Nguyen Duy Trinh's statement was made from a position of weakness and the American hawks should insist that now is the time to hit Vietnam harder than ever, then it would be a major blunder. Hanoi is prepared for such a hawklike reaction."

Republic of North Vietnam, asking him whether he had invited President Johnson to meet him in Hanoi," the broadcast said.

"The same question was cabled by Robert Little from CBS, New York.

"The following answer was given by President Ho Chi Minh's secretariat on February 2:

"Concerning your question, we are authorized to confirm that the statement of the Rev. A. M. Muste in his press conference in Paris on January 24 broadly reflects the President's idea."

Muste reported at the time the Ho invitation responded to a Johnson remark that he was prepared to go anywhere at any time to discuss peace.

Ho's words, as recalled by Rabbi Feinberg, were:

"Mr. Johnson has stated that he would talk to anyone any time, anywhere about peace."

"I invite Mr. Johnson to be our guest, sitting just as you are here, in the palace of the former French Governor General of Indo-China."

"Let Mr. Johnson come with his wife and daughters, his secretary, his doctor, his cook, but let him not come with a gun at his hip."

NY TIMES 1/24/67

General defends Viet slap

FEB 22, 1967

WASHINGTON (AP) — Gen. David M. Shoup, former Marine Corps commandant, said today he stood by his statements questioning U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia.

He has been quoted as saying he didn't think that Southeast

Asia was worth American lives.

But he pointed out in a telephone interview today that he also said that maybe the people were.

His reported remarks in full were: "I want to tell you, I don't think the whole of Southeast Asia, as related to the present and future safety and freedom of the people of this country, is worth the life or limb of a single American. But maybe the people are and maybe the people of South America are, too. And maybe that's confusing."

"I believe that if we had and would keep our dirty, bloody, dollar-crooked fingers out of the Cont. next page

Hanoi Gives Its Terms Once More

Paris FEB 22, 1967

Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia said yesterday that North Vietnam's representative in France had asked him to state that Hanoi stood by its offer to enter into talks with the United States if American bombing was unconditionally and permanently halted.

The North Vietnamese envoy, Mai Van Bo, stressed that Hanoi could not possibly stop helping "its Southern brothers who must liberate themselves from the American invasion," the prince said.

He added that this was Hanoi's answer to President Johnson's demand for a reciprocal North Vietnamese gesture to go with the cessation of American bombing.

Sihanouk, here on a private visit, spoke at a luncheon given in his honor by the association of the French diplomatic press and the Anglo-American Press Association of Paris.

He said that Bo went to the Cambodian Embassy Thursday night to ask him to deliver the message to the two press groups.

New York Times

Sharp U.S. Rebuttal to Peace Idea

Washington FEB 21, 1967

The Defense Department yesterday rejected the latest suggestion that a "permanent and unconditional" end of bombing in North Vietnam should be ordered as a preliminary to peace talks with Hanoi.

The department commented on a statement in Paris by Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia that he had been authorized to state that the only condition laid down by Hanoi for talks with the United States was a permanent and unconditional end to the bombing.

Sihanouk's statement "again demonstrates a clear absence of realism," the Defense Department said.

"Communists once again are proposing that war material sent south should be moved painlessly," the Pentagon said.

"This country will not stop the bombing and further endanger the lives of those who resist aggression unless something is offered in return."

It described the offer quoted by Sihanouk as "a demand for a permanent free pass for continued aggression."

United Press

Here: VIET CONG Below: TO END THE WAR

The big American bogey - that South Vietnam will go communist - seems to me without foundation. Nationalism does not necessarily mean communism. What is North Vietnam's interest then if the NLF are not going to bring the South into the 'fold'? As a student of communist affairs, it seems to me that the Vietcong's policies and attitudes are in strange contradiction to the basic tenets of communism. First and foremost, North Vietnam got heavily involved in the affairs of the South during the time of Diem. Few people now deny Diem has his

counting American military offensives, while not decisive, are undoubtedly making life extremely unpleasant for them. By this time they may well be seeing that their best chance of success is through a political rather than a military strategy. The Americans are quite right to think that the Vietcong can no longer 'win' a shooting war; and the Vietcong must surely have reached the same conclusion.

In talking to them, the Americans would be accepting the likelihood that the Front leadership is not purely Communist or rigidly wedded to Hanoi and slavishly controlled from there. There is little doubt that there is a genuine regional divergence in political outlook between the Vietcong leadership and Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi. In fact, the Americans might find the National Liberation Front—less shackled to conventional ideology—easier to deal with than Ho.

What would the Americans and the National Liberation Front leaders discuss? Obviously, an end to the bombing of North Vietnam would be a condition of serious talks, as it would be of any peace talks with anyone, anywhere. In return, the US might extract a visible concession from the Vietcong, such as the cessation of terrorist activities in Saigon and elsewhere. If these activities continued despite a pledge of good

place among the crooks and rogues of the world. Finally, he was even too much for America. North Vietnamese aid to the NLF was on an infinitely smaller scale, until the US began to bomb the North, as a result of the lack of progress being made in the South. Now the North Vietnamese are fixed and right in it. The West, of course, play right into the North Vietnamese hands when they say they will negotiate only through Hanoi. North Vietnam has more to gain than the South from unification. If the North plays it carefully, Ho Chi Minh ends up with everything.

America says the NLF is not independent. (U Thant says it is. I think it is.) Accordingly, the US will try to negotiate only through Hanoi. The NLF naturally will have nothing to do with peace talks to

will from the Front, at least the Americans would learn something of the shortcomings of Front control over its outlying cadres. There would also be the question of Hanoi's representation at full-scale talks: would the Northerners be there as full-time participants or as observers?

The ultimate aim of any negotiations would be to get the Vietcong and 'moderate' South Vietnamese politicians to decide how the Vietcong could be integrated into a representative political set-up. The Front has made it clear it would welcome a coalition. And such contacts could be achieved without military risk; troops would remain in position.

What advantage would direct talks with the Vietcong produce for the Americans? To begin with, it would be sensible purely in terms of practical politics. Since there are signs that there is less than total rapport between the South Vietnamese of the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese Hanoi regime, in respect both of personalities and of doctrine, the Vietcong talking to Americans might cause consternation and loss of face in Hanoi. But Ho Chi Minh would be in no position to complain, since he can hardly oppose self-determination for the South Vietnamese.

When the Front comes into the light of day it might well turn out that not all its hard-core

members are dedicated to establishing a rigid Communist regime in Saigon, as American 'hawks' maintain. Judging from recent conversations Mr Harrison Salisbury of the *New York Times* had with members of the National Liberation Front in North Vietnam it seems likely to be the case.

Their own country

There would also be the great realistic and practical advantage that the Americans would be dealing with the representatives of a very large section of the South Vietnamese population—who in any event cannot ultimately be ignored. The Americans can either try to obliterate the Vietcong altogether, which militarily seems to be ruled out, or they must think in terms of giving the Vietcong a stake in their own country—if the war is ever to be brought to an end.

To many Americans, this new sort of initiative would seem like a dangerous and shameful sell-out. But President Johnson has already proposed unconditional talks with North Vietnamese; to talk to the Vietcong would in principle be no more a sell-out than to talk to the men in Hanoi who, in the official American view, are responsible for the Vietcong's activities.

For many Americans, too, talks with the Vietcong conjures up visions of American

which they are not invited - not strange when you consider they do most of the actual fighting. Hieu says: 'We will fight on, even if all our allies desert us.'

Perhaps the reason why no one genuinely gets on with peace talks, or sends an envoy to hear what the Vietcong have to say, is simpler. Maybe America does not want negotiations until the two Guantanamo-type, unassailable solid concrete bases are completed at Cam Ran Bay and Pleiku, in a couple of years time. The early-warning system now being installed at Pleiku seems more relevant to some other war. It could be that America has already decided this is all she wants of South Vietnam, and peace will be negotiated then. The one thing that won't happen before then is the end of the war, unless most of the people of South Vietnam are killed.

negotiators confronting a band of bearded savages. Yet the leaders of the National Liberation Front are as bourgeois, well-educated and 'respectable' as any Vietnamese politician in Hanoi or Saigon.

Wartime leader

It might also be objected that the Americans would find it impossible to disengage from Marshal Ky, whom they have done their best to build up into a world figure. But the fact is that having made Marshal Ky, the Americans can also unmake him. They could argue that Ky has been a good wartime leader who should stand down in order to achieve peace. They could maintain, reasonably enough, that if the war is to be settled by South Vietnamese themselves then Northerners like Ky—and Ho Chi Minh—should stand aside.

All this presupposes an American willingness to compromise. Everything one sees on the ground in South Vietnam suggests that they must do so. Otherwise they seem to have no prospect before them except to go slogging on down the present tunnel of diminishing returns. Overtures to Hanoi have produced no acceptable response. An approach to the National Liberation Front, which after all is far more directly concerned than the North Vietnamese, seems more logical and could be more rewarding.

MARINE GENERAL, cont.

business of these nations so full of depressed, exploited people, they will arrive at a solution of their own. That they design and want. That they fight and work for. And if unfortunately their revolution must be of the violent type because the 'haves' refuse to share with the 'have-nots' by any peaceful method, at least what they get will be their own, and not the American style, which they don't want and above all don't want crammed

down their throats by Americans."

Shoup's remarks were made in a speech at the 10th annual Junior College World Affairs Day in Los Angeles May 14, 1966. Sen. Vance Hartke, D-Ind., distributed it in a press release Monday, saying Shoup joined him in questioning whether escalation of the war in Vietnam is in the best interests of the United States.

Shoup is now retired and lives in Arlington, Va.

Although under devastating attack from the North, South Viet-Nam has not abandoned its efforts to create a better life for all its inhabitants; nor have we slackened in our help to them in this field. In the year ending July 30, 1966, we spent some \$640 million in this effort alone, an average of \$40 for every South Vietnamese.

"VIETNAM IN BRIEF"

Dept. of State Publication 8173

Let's see, \$2 bil/month for war is \$1500 per cap/per year for war less \$40 per cap per year for peace leaves Death and Destruction the winna by \$1460 per cap per year.

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