

Statement by Richard M. Nixon

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AN APPRAISAL OF MANILA

In one significant respect the President's visit to Manila has served a useful purpose. It has helped to unite our Asian allies and to give Asians a visible demonstration that America remains behind her commitment to a Free Pacific.

Every American can take pride as well in the warm reception accorded their President in the many foreign capitals he visited.

It is time now, however, to take stock of what Manila accomplished. It is time to renew the debate on the Johnson Administration's policy in Vietnam, for this war is not only the global issue in this election, it is one of the central issues of our time.

On his return, the President said that he did not seek nor did he receive any new commitments. A number of foreign policy observers have pointed out that the trip has brought us no closer to peace.

In fact, the wording of the Communique from Manila itself, has raised some grave policy questions which should be answered by President Johnson before the American people go to the polls on November 8.

1. The Peace Proposal -- Mutual Withdrawal

The Manila Communique states: "The people of South Vietnam will ask their allies to remove their forces and evacuate their installations as the military and subversive



forces of North Vietnam are withdrawn, infiltration ceases and the level of violence thus subsides."

This states clearly that if North Vietnam withdraws its forces back across its border, and the violence thus subsides, we shall withdraw all American forces out of Vietnam, most of them ten thousand miles back to the United States. The effect of this mutual withdrawal would be to leave the fate of South Vietnam to the Viet Cong and the South Vietnamese Army.

On the surface, a commitment to mutual withdrawal appears to be a reasonable approach toward de-escalation. But, on reflection, mutual withdrawal of North Vietnam and United States troops simply turns back the clock two years and says "let the South Vietnamese fight it out with the Viet Cong."

The South Vietnamese Army could not prevail for any length of time over the Communist guerrillas without American advisors, air support and logistical backing. Communist victory would most certainly be the result of "mutual withdrawal" if the North Vietnamese continued their own logistical support of the Communist guerrillas.

At the moment, the major area where Viet Cong terrorists face South Vietnamese troops without large commitments of either U. S. or North Vietnamese troops is in the Mekong Delta; there the Viet Cong hold the upper hand. Thus, the first question which should be answered by the President is:



Does this new Manila proposal for mutual withdrawal by the US and North Viet Nam mean that we are now willing to stand aloof and let the future of the South Vietnamese be determined by the victor of a military contest between the Viet Cong and the government of South Vietnam?

If this is a proper interpretation of the Manila Communique, our endorsement jeopardizes every strategic American objective in Vietnam.

The mutual withdrawal offer, which would ultimately allow the Viet Cong to regain the upper hand, might be a temporarily successful propaganda bluff.

But what if our bluff is called? What if the North Vietnamese suddenly agree to march their troops out of South Vietnam in step with our own troops, leaving the secretly-supplied Viet Cong behind to terrorize and take over?

That would place us on the horns of a terrible dilemma: If we kept our Manila pledge to withdraw, we would leave the South Vietnamese people to the mercy of the Viet Cong. But if we decided to stay in South Vietnam until the Viet Cong were pacified, we would be breaking our Manila pledge of mutual withdrawal and suffer a worldwide crisis of credibility.

Keeping our national word - honoring our commitments to defend freedom - has cost us dearly. Why endanger our hard-won credibility for this temporary propaganda advantage?



We are off base with our offer of mutual withdrawal of regular troops; let us be thankful that Hanoi has not been diplomatically alert enough to catch us off base. We and our allies must amend the Manila Communique to spell out that any "mutual withdrawal" is by no means limited to "regular" North Vietnamese troops but also means the complete termination of logistical support for the Viet Cong and pacification of Viet Cong-occupied areas.

2. The Peace Forum -- The Repudiation of Geneva

In the Manila Communique, the Geneva Agreements that resulted in the partition of Vietnam in 1954 were described as "unfortunate and regrettable."

Further on, the communique states, "The people of South Vietnam, mindful of their experience since 1954, insist that any negotiations leading to the end of hostilities incorporate effective international guarantees."

Our allies at Manila apparently felt that a return to Geneva for settlement of Asian problems would be a grave mistake, and that the place for settlement of Asian affairs was at an All Asian Peace Conference.

Up to now U. S. policy has been to accept the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 as a basis for negotiation; the President has never precluded the possibility of another return to Geneva, the scene of past partition and appeasement.



Question: In view of American co-sponsorship of the Manila Communique, may we now assume that the U. S. rejects a return to Geneva as a forum for the peace conference on Asia?

If this is the case, an unequivocal American statement should be issued declaring once and for all that the disastrous road to Geneva is permanently closed as a route for settlement of Asian problems.

The statement should further raise the hopes of Free Asia for a lasting peace by declaring that at any peace conference for settlement of Asian problems, the primary spokesmen for Asian interests will be Asian diplomats and the conference itself will be held under Asian skies.

3. The War Strategy -- Surrendering the Initiative

The Manila Communique further states that the "necessity for such (allied)military action and support must depend for its size and duration on the intensity and duration of the Communist aggression."

This implies that a diminishing of the Communist military effort will bring a corresponding reduction in the allied effort.

If this implication is accurate, then we have offered to surrender a decisive military advantage at the Manila Conference. We have offered to leave it to Communist generals to determine the timing and intensity of the war. The decision would be theirs when military advantages should be pressed and when a breathing spell should be granted.



This seems directly contrary to the military principle enunciated by General Eisenhower in the U. S. News and World Report when he stated: "I do not believe in 'gradualism' in fighting a war. I believe in putting in the kind of military strength we need to win and getting it over with as soon as possible."

I know of no successful military effort that ever keyed its own intensity simply to match that of the aggressor -- thus deliberately surrendering to the aggressor the initiative for major offensives:

Question: Will we, as the Communique indicates limit our military response to the fluctuating intensity of Communist aggression? Or, shall we move in the other direction, as General Eisenhower recommends, and increase the intensity of our military effort to shorten the war; and to reduce American and allied casualties?

5. The War Strategy -- Escalation of U. S. Manpower

Wednesday of this week, the Pentagon announced that 46,000 more American troops would be sent to Vietnam before the end of the year. The same source predicted the American commitment would rise to more than 400,000 in early 1967.

Senator Stennis of the Armed Services Committee has estimated that there will be 500,000 U. S. troops in South Vietnam by the end of next year. One Pentagon source indicates that the number of American soldiers and Marines necessary to achieve American goals would be 600,000; another places the figure at 750,000.



Question: How many more American troops -- in addition to this latest 46,000 -- do we currently plan to send to fight in Vietnam in 1967? Will the draft quota, which reached a 15-year-high in October, have to be raised again to meet our troop requirements?

6. The War Strategy -- Allied Troop Commitments

While it was widely anticipated that President Johnson would return with a pledge from our Asian allies to increase dramatically the Asian troop commitment in Vietnam, this was not a reasonable expectation.

The Koreans are already as heavily committed in manpower as the United States, the Thais and the Filipinos are as heavily confronted by growing Communist insurgencies of their own, and the political realities and the size of their armies dictate the impossibility of any great commitment from Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand.

While large commitments of the soldiers of our Asian allies are not realistic goals today, they are the ideal goals to which the United States should continue to strive. Nations whose soldiers have borne the burden of the defense of freedom have received a healthy inoculation against Communist subversion.

7. Confusion About Concessions

The concessions for peace which Ambassador Goldberg has offered to diplomats at the UN General Assembly far exceed those which the President has relayed to the American people.



A few weeks ago, in his opening remarks to the current session of the General Assembly, Mr. Goldberg reported America was prepared to negotiate directly with the enemy, including the Viet Cong. He further stated, "Nor do we seek to exclude any segment of the South Vietnamese people from peaceful participation in their country's future."

The U. S. Mission to the UN has made it clear that America has no objections to Viet Cong participation in the government of South Vietnam when peace is achieved. In short, the American Delegation has informed the diplomatic and press corps at the UN that America will accept a coalition government with the Communists for South Vietnam.

President Johnson has never given public backing to either direct negotiations with the Viet Cong or the concept of a coalition government with the Communists.

While President Johnson and Secretary Rusk have been telling the nation one thing about what is acceptable in the negotiations and after them, Ambassador Goldberg and the American Delegation have been telling the diplomats at the UN quite another. The differences are not just in tone, but in substance.

Allowing the Communists to help govern Vietnam cannot be squared with the President's stated policy of no reward for aggression.

The President has been silent on Mr. Goldberg's proposals. He has an obligation to clear up the confusion and to declare whether or not America will negotiate with representatives of



the National Liberation Front; whether or not we will agree to a coalition government with the Communists for the future of South Vietnam.

He should either declare himself in support of Mr. Goldberg's proposals -- or have Mr. Goldberg return to a position consistent with the no-reward-for-aggression policy enunciated at Manila.

8. The Financing of the War

Last week, Congressman Mahon of Texas was quoted as saying that a tax increase would be necessary to finance the increasing cost of the war in Vietnam.

Question: Does the Johnson Administration, as is widely predicted, intend to raise taxes after November Eight to pay the rising costs of the war? Or will the President follow the proposed Republican route of cutting non-essential spending to provide the funds for this conflict? The President must take a clear-cut position on this now so that the people can support or reject his policy on Election Day.

These are not easy questions. I know the American people do not expect easy answers. But they do expect the President of the United States, following this visit to Manila and Vietnam, to give them a much more detailed assessment of where we are going in Vietnam, and what will be the cost in men and money.



Any appraisal of the Manila Conference and our policy in Vietnam must come to grips with these realities:

1. While the mission to Manila had a welcome effect on our friends it had no effect on our enemies and peace is no nearer;
2. The Administration's past strategy has produced neither peace nor victory over aggression;
3. The Administration's current policy resigns America and the Free Asian nations to a war which could last five years and cost more casualties than Korea;
4. A strategy for the future must be devised that will increase the military, economic and diplomatic pressure on the aggressors to end the war and will guarantee peace without surrender throughout Asia.

In my travels across the country in recent months, I have encountered an odd sense of helplessness on the part of many thoughtful Americans in the field of foreign policy.

Their frustration is caused by a combination of lack of information, a cacaphony of voices that purport to speak for U. S. policy, a confusion of goals and a lack of answers to legitimate questions such as those posed in this appraisal.

Informed debate on the conduct of the war is well within the tradition of the bipartisan foreign policy, so carefully built over the past three decades.



After the orderly tumult over an American election is over, and the people have determined the nature of the Congress, it would be constructive for the President to call together leaders of both parties to pursue together the development of a clear, practical, bi-partisan foreign policy that will end the war and provide the basis for a lasting peace.

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